Nana's Daughter

A STORY OF PARISIAN LIFE.

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"Really, my little fellow," said Nana, thrusting him back with panther-like strength. *(See p. 25.)*

NANA'S DAUGHTER

A STORY OF PARISIAN LIFE

BY

ALFRED SIRVEN AND HENRI LEVERDIER

WITH A LETTER FROM THE AUTHORS TO

M. ÉMILE ZOLA

TRANSLATED FROM THE 25TH FRENCH EDITION

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TO M. ÉMILE ZOLA.

MONSIEUR AND BROTHER-AUTHOR:

In view of presenting — successfully if it be possible — a contrary thesis to your own on the hereditary character of vice, we have ventured to borrow the name of your heroine, the "NANA" so ably stripped by you in a work, which if it does not found a school, will fix a date in Literature.

But with the object of rendering this woman still more odious, we pick her out of the gutter, in which you let her wallow for five hundred pages, and raise her to a commanding position in Parisian *galanterie.*

Her language greatly profits by this change of fortune, and so our book, destitute of the crudity of expression which has perhaps contributed to the stir occasioned by your work, claims to be "natural" rather than "naturalistic."

And now, dear brother-author, will you excuse the very great liberty we have taken in giving your daughter a child, between us?

The very sincere admirers of your talent,

ALFRED SIRVEN AND H. LEVERDIER.

NANA'S DAUGHTER.

PROLOGUE.

THE commissary of police put on his spectacles and asked: "Your name, madame?"

"My name? Why every one knows it in Paris; and you must certainly have heard of me."

"Perhaps so; who are you, pray?"

"Why, Nana, of course."

"But you have a family name, no doubt?"

"A family name, I? Come, sir, don't you understand my position? Ever since I've known myself I've rolled about without any family ties. A person like me can't have a family name, of course."

"Then you ought to know better than any one else, how needful a mother is to a child; for if your own mother had not abandoned you, you would not be what you are."

"You are mistaken, sir. I was made for that. And besides, why should I do for my daughter what others haven't done for me?"

"Because it seems to me that you are in a position to bring her up, if not in your own house, at least at your expense. You are elegantly attired, you have come here in a carriage, you have servants——"

"But all that isn't mine. It belongs to my protector. I'm like the Jesuits — excuse the comparison — nothing is mine, not even myself. I'm my protector's property. My horses, my furniture, my jewels, my dresses, all belong to him. He has bought them all and so they are his. He has treated himself to a complete establishment, a woman, horses and dogs; but then he hates brats. So, come, have I the right to keep a brat? No, it wasn't set down in the contract."

"But the child is his like all the rest."

"Oh, dear no, the child wasn't down on the list."

"Then it is not his?"

"The poor fellow never had anything to do with it. He never cared to have any children with his great ladies, and yet you fancy that with me — Oh! really now, you are overflattering!"

"But who is the father then?"

"Oh! an idiot, a fool, for whom I had five minutes' fancy. It cost me a brat. The idea of it! Luckily the Foundling Hospital wasn't built for dogs. Its business is to care for the children of women like me. Nana isn't a mother you know, she's a harlot."

"But couldn't you change your life and work, you are so young?"

"Change! Can I? Have you ever seen an animal change its species? I'm an animal, I am, and I can't be anything else. I don't reason, I'm guided by instinct like a hound. And my game is man. When I say man, I mean a swell with heaps of gold and plenty of bank-notes. As for the needy fellows, I don't care for them. A fellow who's hard up is no longer a man."

"Could you tell me the father's name?"

"I can't tell it. It would do me harm. He was the only real lover I ever indulged in; and you see my reward?"

For a moment the magistrate remained thoughtful, asking himself if he ought not to compel this mother to keep her child, and if it were right for him to saddle the poor relief funds with the expense of bringing up a worthless woman's progeny. But, suddenly, a more serious point was presented to his conscience. A soul was brought to him to save; had he the right to throw it back into the sewer? The claims of morality rose up vividly. It was the child's interest that she should be rescued from maternal contamination, and the profit of society would be an honest girl. He made up his mind. Virginie, Nana's maid, held the baby, who was asleep. The mother, bored by the various administrative formalities, was taking an inventory of the office, and reading the titles of the different legal works in the book-case. The gilt lettering on the backs of the volumes sparkled in the clear, gay, August sunshine. The magistrate took a note of the particulars which he had been furnished with, and thought of the child, weighing its destiny in his mind. Nana, leaning toward the glass door of the book-case, spelled out loud the titles of the books which attracted her curiosity.

"'Manual of Judicial and Administrative Police,'" she read; "that must be funny. How I *should* like to belong to the police. Merely to find out what goes on among real ladies. 'The Regulations of Authorized Prostitution'; 'The Public Morality Police Service'; 'Encyclopedia of Games and Gambling'; Encyclopedia of French Law——'"

However, the commissary interrupted her. "I must tell you," said he, "that in accordance with the regulations of the Foundling Hospital, you will not be able to see your daughter, nor will you even know where she may be placed."

"Why is that, sir?"

"Because, by abandoning your child, you abdicate all right

over her. The Poor Relief Board takes your place and becomes the legal guardian. The child is considered to be an orphan, and you are presumed to be dead."

"That's just; you are right. Well, let it be so; I like that better."

"Have you the child's certificate of birth with you?"

"Yes; here it is."

"Good. Now I will furnish you with an order for admission into the Foundling Hospital." And having summoned his secretary, the commissary said to him: "It is an order for the Rue d'Enfer."

The secretary sat down, and then, in a clear and somewhat strident voice, the commissary dictated as follows:

PREFECTURE OF POLICE,
1st DIVISION—5th Bureau,
PARIS, *the 14th August*, 1860.

"I request the director of the Foundling Hospital, Rue d'Enfer, to receive from the bearer of the present note, and provide provisionally for the maintenance of, a child of the feminine sex, born on the 28th July of the present year, and entered, the same day, on the registry of births of the Eighth Arrondissment, under the name of Nanette; the father being unknown, and the mother declaring herself unable to bring up her child, as her position is that of a kept woman, which facts are duly set forth in our procès verbal of this date, transmitted to the Prefect of Police, by whom this provisional admission will be ratified.

"THE COMMISSARY OF POLICE OF THE
"EIGHTH ARRONDISSMENT."

The commissary signed this order, and then said to his secretary, "Now draw up a bulletin of information for the director of the hospital. I have taken notes of the needful particulars. Here they are. And make haste. The papers must be sent at once."

He placed the order of admission in an envelope. "Shall you take the child to the hospital yourself, madame?" he asked.

"Oh dear, no! I don't care for hospitals—and besides, it would make me feel queer to leave my baby in such a place. Virginie shall take her. I'll pay the cab."

"I have no objection to offer. You are free to send the child. All the formalities are accomplished."

"Ah! so much the better. Come, Virginie. Your servant, sir."

The commissary made a pretense of bowing, and then Nana caught up her lace train with serpentine grace and left the room, followed by her maid, who carried the poor child. Downstairs, in the street, the tall, long-legged, English horses were pawing impatiently. The coachman, who looked superb with

his thick-set, correctly-trimmed, black whiskers, all but stood on his box with dignified stiffness. The color of the livery was mousquetaire blue, like the panels of the landau. Both coachman and footman wore breeches and white-silk stockings. The door of the carriage had a silver handle, and an artist had painted on it a Gothic N, surmounted by a coronet.

A number of loiterers were assembling in the belief that the carriage was the Emperor's; and they became spell-bound with admiration for Nana's imperial beauty, as she appeared on the threshold of the commissary's office, holding up her blue *faille* skirt and displaying her satin Louis XV. shoes, the high heels of which were spanned with gold. Her hair gleamed like an aureole around her low brow, the true brow of a Grecian statue. Her almond eyes, underlined with a touch of the crayon, beamed with deep and troublous azure beneath the shadow cast by their lashes. Her tiny nostrils twitched as they inhaled the air, but the outline of her nose was of inflexible regularity. The purple of life and sensuality glowed on her lips, which were curved with enigmatical irony; and as the warm ruddiness parted in a smile, one could see her white teeth, cold as pearls. He hands were small and gloved with blue kid to the elbows. Her bonnet was but a tuft of roses, blooming amid her splendid red hair, which was traversed by a tapering dagger having an onyx hilt encrusted with sapphires. She appeared in the full sunlight, with her loins as supple as a panther's, her hips worthy of Venus, and her firm, erect bosom which rebelled against the tyranny of stays. Her head raised, and her eyes beaming clearly, she looked down from the height of her insolent beauty on the pale toilers who went by — some slowly, and bowed with weighty thought, and others swiftly, spurred on by hunger.

A cab was passing, and Nana made a sign. The driver drew up, and respectfully sprang from his box to open the door. She kissed her child, and, indeed, her voice trembled somewhat as she said: "Good-by, my duck." But then she added: "Take care not to lose the paper, Virginie."

"To the hospital in the Rue d'Enfer," said the maid to the driver, who climbed on to his box again. And then the cab cut the crowd atwain and disappeared round the street corner.

Nana stood on the pavement looking after the departing child henceforth lost to her. But this gleam of maternal feeling was of short duration. She sprang into her landau, and a footman shut the door. "Home!" she said in a curt voice.

The coachman touched up the horses, which started off at a fast trot toward the Boulevards, turning to the left and making straight for the Madeleine. It was the lounger's favorite hour. Well-gloved and decorated gentlemen bowed to this queen of vice, who passed by in the implacable pride of her beauty. And then resuming their lounge with a stick on their lips and a glass

in their eye, they ogled the women who smilingly braved the converging glances of the absinthe drinkers. Yellow rays were darting between the high chimney-stacks, obliquely streaking the dust-laden air, setting the shop fronts ablaze, and lighting up the gilt moldings and the silken fabrics displayed for sale. Heavy omnibuses rumbled on between the thinning foliage; cabs jogged past, drawn by wretched, broken-down nags; and light victorias and cozy broughams, in which bald-headed gentlemen were reading the Bourse share-list and munching extinguished cigars, whisked by at the full speed of high stepping trotters.

Nana's landau turned into the Boulevard Malesherbes and made straight for the Parc Monceau. Her mansion overlooked the park. It was a marvel of fancy and lavish display. The conservatory alone cost five thousand francs a month. The vestibule, adorned with Florentine mosaics, preceded a double flight of pink marble steps, with a green bronze balustrade, on which figured a Virginia creeper climbing to the final landing. On the first floor there was a large bay window of stained glass, the pale golden tints of which softened the light and lent cathedral-like dimness to this temple of vice. In the dark corners of the landings, lascivious statues could be seen rising up in alabaster nudity, amid clumps of exotic plants with downy foliage.

A valet stood in the hall, awaiting his mistress. "Has the marquis arrived?" she asked.

"He is in madame's room."

"Ah! very good."

She let her train fall, and with proud grace slowly ascended the pink marble steps, over which her silken skirt rustled in cadence with her undulating gait and the swinging of her hips. The marquis was awaiting her, carelessly stretched on a Turkish divan, and as she entered he did not rise. "Well?" said he, "is it settled — finished?"

"Yes, my dear; I've packed off the brat. Are you pleased, eh, ducky?"

"Of course?"

She knelt down beside the divan to kiss him. He allowed her to do so, but did not return the kiss. "What is the matter with you? What are you thinking about?" she asked.

"Why, about nothing, of course.

"Not even about me?"

"No, 'pon my word."

"And yet I've just sacrificed my child for you."

"Come, don't be sentimental, Nana. You know very well that you haven't made this sacrifice either for the Marquis d'Albigny, who sometimes pays you, or for the old King, who always does so, although he isn't your acknowledged protector,

for I am the master here. To tell the truth, you amuse yourself with us, and you would like to deceive us in everything; but I know you — you only love your infernal beauty — to which you owe the idiotic luxury surrounding you. You only care for your despotic whims, your vain and voluptuous fancies. For you are only whim and fancy, like all women who live on men."

"What! It wasn't to spare you the worry of that child that I sent it to the hospital? You didn't leave off bothering me until ——"

"Why, of course, the child wasn't mine."

"How do you know that?"

"I know it!" said a man who suddenly entered the room.

"What do you want, sir?" asked Nana, curtly.

"My child!"

"Your child? Do you take my house for a baby-farming establishment? Marquis, show this intruder to the door."

"I? Not at all, my dear. This family scene amuses me. Go on, sir, make yourself at home."

The stranger was walking feverishly about with his arms crossed. He was mechanically following an oblique sun-ray which intersected the room. He was tall, thin and pale, with a long black beard streaked with white hairs. Suddenly he paused in front of the marquis. "You told me to make myself at home, Marquis d'Albigny," he said.

"Quite so."

"Very good, then leave this room or I shall kill you."

"By what right, pray?"

"This woman belongs to me; she is the mother of my child."

"I can't compliment you on it," sneered the marquis.

"This man is an impostor," said Nana, coldly.

"Oh! oh! this is getting warm," resumed d'Albigny, with a laugh. "'Pon my word, my beauty, I shall leave you to settle your love affairs alone. Only, another time when I call on you I will thank you to have your door better guarded." So saying, he raised the tapestry hanging before the door and disappeared.

The stranger again paused in his walk and exclaimed: "Now, Nana, we must talk together."

"Here, come now, my big fellow, haven't you finished crouching at my door like a lost dog? What! because I was goose enough to follow you into the country and stop there for three months with you, because I was foolishly faithful to you all that time, for which you rewarded me by compromising with my serious protectors, did you imagine that it was going to last forever, that Nana would always live in the moon with you, and that it sufficed to give her a child to make a mother of her? You fool! You don't know me, you don't see through Nana!

If I maddened you with my love, and intoxicated you with my cuddles, it was only to toss you aside again, as dry and as light as an empty walnut. Poor chap! If you had had ten times more blood in your veins, I should have drunk it up with my harlot's thirst, and not only your blood, I should have devoured your brain and courage, soul, honor and everything. I should have emptied you like a thief empties a banker's safe."

"A thief did you say, Nana — a thief? Ah! don't let us talk about that."

"Pooh! On the contrary, let us talk about it."

"No, no, I say. Listen. Some one has rung."

"It's nothing; some tradesman, perhaps, or the King, my old King who comes to see me. For you know that I'm eating up a kingdom just now. Ah! to be sure I've good teeth. So much the worse for those who let me bite."

"Come, my little Nana, be reasonable. Tell me where our child is. You have sent her out to nurse, haven't you? You, perhaps, want some old fellow to think she is his daughter, so that he may give her a dowry. Well, it's not worth while. I've economized; I've worked, and I've earned ten thousand francs for the little one. Yes, ten thousand francs, do you hear, Nana? Each of those silver coins is an hour of my life, a drop of my blood, and I bring you them all. Give me back my daughter!"

"Your daughter? I've lost her."

"Lost her! What is this ——"

"Abandoned her. There!"

"Where?"

"I don't know."

"Where? I ask."

"I've sold her."

"To whom?"

"To some mountebanks."

"You lie!"

"Well, yes, I lie. You bother me with your tattle. I don't want to be worried with your brats. Go off. You make my head ache."

"Here are the ten thousand francs."

"Five hundred napoleons, well, what are they? You haven't even stolen them, and I don't care for money earned by work. Poor people's coin, it smells of sweat."

"Stolen them, you say! You wish I had stolen them?"

"Why, yes. It would at least show that you prefer me to everything else."

There was a pause. The stranger again began to follow the ray of light on the carpet. It was now perpendicular to the bed. It flashed on one of the corner posts, showing up the ebony molding encrusted with ivory. It darted over the white-

satin counterpane embroidered with a black sphinx, and shone vertically athwart the outspread wings of a silver eagle which hovered at night-time over Nana's slumber. This ray of light transpierced the dimness around. Myriads of atoms which had become luminous crossed it, following an oblique course, and springing up suddenly amid the darkness like particles of light. In one corner one could barely perceive a bronze elephant bearing a Chinese tower, and reared upon a malachite pedestal. The low, carved, easy chairs, softly cushioned, were lost in shade. The black sphinxes embroidered on the white-satin hangings were bedimmed. Alone, against the Venetian mirror with a silver frame of detached ornamentation, one could distinguish the branching candelabra and the bronze statue of fleeting Time holding between two fingers a golden thread, from which a globe was hanging.

Suddenly the stranger stopped. The ray of light having gradually become thinner and more oblique had now gone out. Nana had quietly unfastened her bodice, and taken off her stays; and then, with her breast bare, she had stretched herself upon the divan near the window. Her statuesque profile stood out in bold relief. The tiny dagger with the onyx handle had fallen from her hair on to the carpet. Her lowered eyelids cast a soft shadow which extended almost to her nostrils, and she was half dozing, draped queen-like in her silken robe. There was a disturbing expression on her parted lips — perfidious candor and mysterious lascivity blooming together in a smile. Her former lover knelt down near her, and in a low and trembling voice, hesitating at each syllable, he asked: "So, Nana, if I had stolen for you, you would love me more?"

She burst out laughing. "Who knows? I'm tired of the love of all these worn-out fellows, with softened brains and puny limbs, who think they pay me what I'm worth, and complain when they've ruined themselves for me. What of that? They've sold their property, but I've sold myself. Ah! do you know what I dream of? I should like a lover who had murdered some one for me. He would at least be faithful till he was claimed by the guillotine."

"How can you possibly have such horrible fancies! It is all this wealth that keeps you in shameful vice. Abandon this dirty life, raise yourself again, dress yourself like an honest woman, renounce this band of *blases*. Love for nothing, if you wish to love. It is never too late to become pure again. If you took our child back, each kiss you gave her would wipe away a stain!"

"Poor chap!"

"Come with me! You know how happy we were in the country. We will go far, far away with the little one. I won't stop any longer here. We will go no matter where; I have

enough money for a little while. And I shall find more. Come, will you come?"

"Oh! leave me alone; you bother me. I eat too much at supper last night, and didn't sleep long enough this morning. Go off, pray. I'm tired of telling you that I won't take your money."

"Then, if I must tell everything, the money I bring isn't mine."

"Whose is it, then?"

"I took it from the safe. I thought you would not come with me as you are tired of me; but I wanted to buy the child, to save her from contagion."

"And you stole to do that? That's nice and no mistake. And for the last week you've been coming to offer me this money so that I might compromise myself with you? Why, you are a scoundrel! If that's the way you wanted to bring the child up, she might as well be like her mother. I don't steal anything. Do you hear? Leave the house, or I'll have you turned out."

He stooped down and picked up the onyx-hilted dagger lying on the carpet. "Don't call, Nana; don't denounce me. To-morrow I shall replace the money. Not a word; I don't know what I might do——" And he feverishly clutched the onyx hilt.

"Really, my little fellow," said Nana, thrusting him back with panther-like strength. "Do you think you frighten me with that trinket? Keep it. I'll give it you." And she rang the bell.

A valet appeared on the threshold. "Show this gentleman out," she said.

"Till we meet again, madame," rejoined her former lover, with emphasis.

"Oh! no good-bye for good," said Nana, laughing.

He left the room; but a moment later Nana recalled her servant. "Follow that man," she ordered, "and have him arrested by the first police agent you meet. I won't be worried, not I." The servant hesitated. "Come, make haste," cried the courtesan, "don't you understand that that fellow's a thief!"

The valet disappeared behind the door-hanging, and Nana could hear him hastily descending the pink marble steps. Night was coming on, and the sky of Paris was tinged with a purple glow. The clock struck seven o'clock. "Oh! oh!" she muttered, "the King's hour, and I'm not ready."

She rang for her maid, who had just returned from the hospital. Virginie entered the room. "Ah! so you are back again," said Nana. "Well?"

"It's all settled, madame."

"At last!" said Nana, with a sigh. "It had to be done.

Come, make haste, light the tapers and dress my hair. I am expecting his majesty!"

CHAPTER I.

Andrée Naviel was adorably pretty. She was the true type of a child of Paris, rather pale, carelessly graceful, with a crystal voice and big light-blue eyes. Her father was a mechanic, employed in a foundry, and her mother mounted roses for Paillardin, the artificial flower-dealer. Andrée displayed wonderful intuition concerning artistic matters and everything that appealed to the imagination, but she held arithmetic in horror. When she was ten years old she had strange tastes, gypsy-like fancies and actress-like whims. As is the case with many children of Paris, she was seized with a desire to show off and attudinize. A kind of innate coquetry took possession of her. Withal she was gentle, loving and good-tempered, not understanding why she was scolded for various girlish freaks, but fond of impossibilities, laughing or crying for nothing, very sensitive, always trying to derive some enjoyment herself, or to procure it for others, and plunging without reflection into chimerical enthusiasm. A strange girl! Already a woman in some respects, too much of a child in others, almost completely ignorant of what her parents and schoolmistress tried to teach her, but guessing many other things.

For an observer, Andrée Naviel was as attractive as a mystery. Her parents were worthy work-people skillful in their callings, of irreproachable honesty, and satisfied feelings, quite destitute of imaginative powers, both fond of order, and knowing how to calculate. They belonged, indeed, to that good, hardy race of toilers, whose quiet yet powerful blood, robust muscles and submissive nerves, usually produce a generation of children physiologically different to this frail little Andrée, who incarnated, as it were, two contrary principles, and seemed to be the offspring of two antipodean natures.

About this time Andrée met with an adventure. Her parents had taken her to the fête of St. Cloud, and she lost them in the crowd. At first she tried to find them, but the attractive fête, the noisy mirth of the mountebanks and the exhibitors of talking seals and three-legged woman, finally induced her to profit by her liberty. She paused near a merry-go-round, sparkling with spangles and gay with many colored banners, which stood out brightly against the verdant depths of the avenues. The fountains were playing and formed a marvelous back-ground. Sheafs of foam ascended like plumes in the full sunlight, and cascades bounded from the heights where tall chestnut trees

rose up with the golden splendor of sunset peering through their foliage scorched by the summer heat. At the end of the ornamental water a two-floored merry-go-round revolved to the sound of music. Among the crowd three young girls, well pleased to show themselves, charming with their purly laughter and careless attitudes, unconscious of the vertigo that possessed them, allowed themselves to be whirled away through the noise and mirth. Andrée longed to ride in the round-about like them, and feel herself revolve amid the light and the music, but she remembered that she had scarcely enough money to pay for her return to Paris.

Close by, at the door of a long traveling wagon, an individual in a black dress-coat was inviting the passers-by to see the "beautiful Irma." "Don't pass without seeing Irma!" he cried, gravely. "Don't die without having seen Irma!"

Andrée was seized with a vague longing to see this matchless Irma, the queen of beauty, who exhibited herself for a copper. However, she repressed a sigh, and regretting her poverty, continued wandering through the crowd, with the hoarse cry of the exhibitor still ringing in her ears. "Ladies and gentlemen, don't pass without seeing the lovely Irma!"

She paused at last before a wrestling booth; and the sight she saw there for the first time, held her spell-bound. On the platform outside, a poor devil dressed as a clown was parading with a Hercules. Andrée was greatly struck by the contrast between these two men. The Hercules was short, thick-set, hairy and hideous, with bestial lips and a red face betokening a sanguine temperament. His bare, bronze-colored arms were tattooed, and the massive muscles of his limbs and his neck were of abnormal proportions. He glanced fiercely around him. His red-streaked eyes retreated under their orbits, ensconced in the shade of his bristly eyebrows, and his forehead was hidden by thick tufts of grayish hair. The clown was a head taller than the Hercules, and his floured, hollow cheeks, his reddened eyes and emaciated limbs, his hands of improbable length, and his whole scraggy frame, lost as it were in his ample costume, inspired Andrée with extraordinary interest.

This strange pair was carrying on a dialogue interspersed with smacks in the face, boxes on the ears, kicks behind, and witticisms. The clown seemed to Andrée like the mind which sneers at physical strength and derides it: the Hercules like the incarnation of brutal force bent on revenge. Blows rained upon the clown, resounding with a thud on his back. They were not make-believe blows, but a formidable avalanche of real thumps, which now and again rang on the clown's whitened face and stretched him on the planks of the platform. The crowd was splitting its sides with laughter, and evidently thought the business very funny.

Andrée, however, had never before witnessed anything so revolting; her heart softened, and she sincerely pitied the poor beaten buffoon. At last, after a fresh pun, more outrageous than the others, the Hercules gave the clown such a kick that he lifted him off his feet, over the platform, and sent him sprawling amid the crowd. The poor fellow fell flat at Andrée's feet.

There was a general burst of laughter. The mirth spread from throat to throat as far as the distant avenues, and the echoes of the great cascade gaily repeated the joyous cries of the pleasure-seeking crowd. Folks cheered the Hercules, and jeered and hissed the clown, who slowly picked himself up and rubbed his loins. Andrée approached him just as he had set himself on his feet and was about to hobble off. "Are you hurt, sir?" she asked, with her fresh voice trembling with saddened timidity.

The buffoon stopped short, affected by these caressing words which caught his ear amid the general jeers. He looked at the fair-haired child, and his pale face was lighted up with strange, despairing tenderness. "No, little one," said he, "I'm not hurt; and besides, it's my way of earning my living. We all have our callings. I'm called Face-to-Smack. Other folks receive decorations, while I get boxes-on-the-ears and kicks behind. And it'll be like that until my ship comes home —won't it now, Mr. Hercules?"

"Quite so, Mr. Face-to-Smack, quite so," bawled the athlete, who was striking an attitude on the platform with his arms crossed, so as to display his muscles.

"I should prefer to see you work," resumed Andrée, with child-like frankness.

"You are quite right, little one," said the pale buffoon; "you are quite right. But do you see I *can't* work. Honest toil won't have anything to do with me. So I must turn to something else to earn some food. For I eat now and then, although I don't look like it."

This strange conversation between the buffoon and the child interested the sight-seers, who gathered round in a circle.

"I say, Mr. Face-to-Smack, do you want to turn schoolmaster?" thundered the Hercules, who was by no means pleased to have his business interrupted.

"Coming, Mr. Hercules, coming!" replied the buffoon, and turning to Andrée, he asked: "Are you alone, little one? Where's your mamma?"

"I've lost her."

"Now, then, have you finished your jaw, you bag of flour?" bawled the Hercules.

"Coming, master, coming. Would you like to see the show?"

asked Face-to-Smack of Andrée. "I'll give you a front seat; come along, I stand treat."

She felt something like the warmth of pleasure rise to her cheeks and became very red.

"Come," continued the buffoon, "say yes; and, besides, I've got some cakes for you if you like——"

"Thanks, Mr. Clown," rejoined Andrée; "I should like to see the show, but keep the cakes for your little ones."

"My little ones? I have none! Ah! I had a little girl who would be about your age by now; but when she was a week old she was taken away from me, and I've never seen her since."

"Who took her?"

"Her mother, a wicked woman, a——"

Face-to-Smack was interrupted. The Hercules had left the platform, caught hold of him by an ear, and was now dragging him back to the booth.

"Don't tear my ears off, Mr. Hercules," pleaded the buffoon. "They wouldn't grow again. They only grow naturally on strong men like you."

The Hercules failed to understand, and began to laugh with satisfaction at his physical superiority. Then the white-faced buffoon spoke to him in an undertone. "All right," said the wrestler, and he bawled to Andrée: "Come here, young 'un."

"Come and see the performance," added the buffoon.

Andrée, who felt a great deal of emotion, set her foot on the steps and went up into the booth. The clown took hold of her hand and led her to a seat in the front row.

The orchestra was frantically playing a fast march. A tall, thin, freckled woman whacked away at the big drum and the cymbals, a fat woman played the piston, and a man with long yellow hair—the type of a needy German—blew in a clarionet with the proud and serious air of an unappreciated *virtuoso*. While this concert proceeded, Face-to-Smack, stationed at the door, made a burlesque speech which set the crowd laughing, and the Hercules challenged all the strong men to wrestle with him, and tossed fencing gloves to amateurs of the foils. Through the open entry Andrée could see faces of every hue—red, white, yellow, and violet ranged in intermitted lines and standing out in relief against the verdant sward of the park lawns. Near the ornamental water, a pastry cook, with a conical cap of gilt paper on his head, stood under a scarlet umbrella, holding a flexible stick, from which hung a string with a piece of gingerbread appended to it. The dainty was to be the property of the urchin who caught it with his teeth, and so all around one could see upturned juvenile faces with glowing eyes watching the bait, and open mouths eager to swallow it. Grown-up sightseers stood in the rear, and split with laughing at this new kind of angling.

The wrestling booth filled rapidly, and the members of the orchestra ceased playing and went to sit down on a plank. The audience was impatient and excited. It was said that a real swell had bet a thousand napoleons that he would make the Hercules bite the dust. No doubt this amateur was being waited for, as the benches already groaned under the weight of the spectators ranged in amphitheatre fashion. Suddenly there was a stir. A tawny-haired woman, sparkling with diamonds and covered with lace, entered the arena and paused at a corner where four or five gentlemen of different ages were standing.

"Come, Face-to-Smack," called the Hercules, "bring some chairs, and make haste."

The buffoon stood motionless, stiffened by mute stupefaction. There was a tragical expression upon his pale face. "Oh! dear, no," he answered in a strident voice; "that lady can go and sit down where she likes."

The clown's refusal was so peremptory, that his master did not insist. "As you like, my fine fellow," he said, resignedly; "only you'll pay for it later on."

The buffoon shrugged his shoulders and shook his head.

"Which of these gentlemen wishes to try a bout with me?" asked the wrestler.

"I," said a middle-aged man.

"Bravo, bravo, Marquis," exclaimed his companions.

"Be quiet, pray," rejoined the amateur. "I don't care to have my name and title in all the newspapers to-morrow."

"Pray take off your coat, sir," resumed the Hercules, who was stripping himself to the waist; and his titled adversary at once imitated his example.

The struggle began by a series of feints. The adversaries placed their hands on each other's shoulders, their arms locked around their muscular necks; but great efforts suddenly loosened the hold, and the two champions found themselves again in front of each other firmly settled on their ankles. The real struggle had not yet begun. This had been but a skirmish for the two antagonists, who had both wished to ascertain what kind of man they had to deal with. Suddenly, however, they sprang upon each other. The Hercules caught the marquis by the loins and forced his chin down on his chest. But the amateur swiftly turned, presenting his back to the professional, and then raising his arms he linked them behind his adversary's skull, and made a terrible effort. The Hercules, lifted off the ground, passed over the marquis' head; but spinning round, he found himself on his feet again with a firm hold in the sand.

The crowd applauded frantically. Andrée understood nothing of what was occurring: this buffoon who refused to be polite to this golden-haired lady, sparkling like a fairy; this marquis who, careless of his 'scutcheon, publicly wrestled with a low-

born professional. Everything she had seen during the last hour stupefied her. She was most interested in Face-to-Smack, whose giant stature and pale face rose up in front of her on the other side of the arena. It seemed to her that the expression of his features had suddenly changed; his smile had something tragical about it now, as if some terrible, mysterious passion were waging behind the flour on his face. However, while Andrée's attention was turned to him, the encounter, momentarily suspended, began again in earnest.

CHAPTER II.

THE struggle was a desperate one this time. The two wrestlers clutched hold of each other at the same moment, their arms tightened around one another's loins, and shoulder to shoulder, cheek to cheek, they leaned forward as if propped against each other. They remained like this for half a minute, panting like wild beasts, feeling each other, and on the alert for a surprise. The titled amateur was growing pale. The professional's red face was becoming violet. Quickly he drew back, and the marquis, taken unawares, fell on his knees. But with a bound he placed himself behind the Hercules, and crouched on all fours. The professional stooped, and was about to seize hold of his adversary with his right arm, when, with a sudden spring, the amateur backed on to the Hercules' stomach with such force that he threw him onto his left side. And then, springing upon him with all his weight, he rolled him in the sand. The professional's shoulders touched the ground.

"Bravo, bravo!" cried the crowd.

The victor quietly raised a curtain, and entered the mountebanks' dressing-room to put on his clothes again. The Hercules followed him.

Meanwhile, Face-to-Smack had stationed himself behind the tawny-haired woman, barring the way out. He overtopped everything like a white spectre, for his buffoon's head resembled a skull, and his ample clown's dress a waving shroud. The woman turned round and beheld this apparition gazing at her.

"What have you done with my child, Nana?" he asked.

"Ah! good heavens!" she cried, "where have I heard that voice before?"

"In your house, you worthless woman."

"Gentlemen, this man is mad. Pray punish this buffoon for me."

Just at this moment the marquis returned. "D'Albigny!" cried Nana, "give this scamp a hiding. He has insulted me."

"The fact is," rejoined the buffoon, "that I requested madame to return me the child we had together."

"Dear me!" exclaimed the marquis. "But, by the way, my beauty, isn't this man your thief!"

"No, sir, I am not a thief. Do you hear me? I returned the money, while you ——"

"Look out, my fine fellow. I advise you to shut up."

"Shut up? And why, pray? Because I'm a mountebank at a fair? But pray, what are you, sir? You come and wrestle with mountebanks, and you don't disdain to give five napoleons to your antagonist, so that he may let you throw him. As you have bet a thousand to your friends, you have nine hundred and ninety-five clear profit. So which is the greater thief of us two?"

D'Albigny was livid, while the Hercules stood in the middle of the arena laughing and by no means ill-pleased that the clown should have publicly revealed his secret understanding with the amateur.

"Just prevent that buffoon of yours from insulting this gentleman," cried Nana.

"Excuse me, my fine lady, but that wasn't in our agreement. As the gentleman is so strong, he can surely cause himself to be respected without my help."

Nana's other admirers had vanished as soon as she had appealed to them to protect her. "Let us go; I've enough of it," said the Marquis D'Albigny. "And as for you, you scamp of a buffoon, I advise you to clear off, if you don't want to go to jail."

"To jail, I? And what for, pray? You had much better be there both of you. To Mazas with the marquis! So St. Lazare with the harlot!"

D'Albigny did not hear the buffoon's last words. A formidable jeer arose from the seats of the booth. "That's enough, that's enough! Turn them out!" howled the public.

"It's scandalous! So honest people can be insulted with impunity under your Republic!" cried a gentleman with well-waxed mustaches, who was standing on a bench. "Why aren't all the blackguards sent to New Caledonia?"

"Excuse me, sir; but whom do you call blackguards here?" asked the Hercules.

"I was not speaking to you," replied the man with the pointed mustache, diving down into the crowd like a jack-in-the-box who has had the lid shut on him.

"That's all I wanted to know," rejoined the professional with a loud laugh.

Since the departure of the tawny-haired woman, Face-to-Smack had approached Andrée and offered her a jam tart which he had bought of the pastry-cook outside.

"Thank you, Mr. Face-to—" She paused, hesitating to finish this name which seemed to her hardly a complimentary one for the strange friend she had met.

"Oh, you can call me Face-to-Smack. It makes no difference. I'm used to it. My little girl would just be as old as you are, my darling."

A tear started from his eye, and left a black mark on his pallid, sunken cheek. Andrée also felt a strange emotion on being so kindly spoken to by this poor clown, who but a moment before had so roughly humiliated a nobleman.

"Attention, Mr. Face-to-Smack," bawled the Hercules, summoning the buffoon. "I want your help here."

The performance continued with the exercises of the brothers Fiotto, two twins of the same age as Andrée. At first they amused themselves in trying their skill and leaping from the trapeze through paper circles, which the Hercules threw to the clown, and which the latter held on a level with his head.

"Travelers for the moon, all aboard!" cried the buffoon, imitating a railway porter.

The crowd thought it very funny, and laughed noisily. Besides, the two little acrobats were very clever. But at the last round one of them failed in his spring from the trapeze, and fell head first onto the ground with great force. He lay there, stretched on his back, pale and bleeding from both the nose and the mouth. The performance was necessarily interrupted; and several worthy people, who would have been the first to complain of the tyranny of the authorities if there had been proper police surveillance in the booth, began to declare that it was disgraceful to allow such horrid sights, and that the government ought to prevent all things of the kind. When the little fellow had been picked up, and taken into the dressing-room the Hercules came to apologize and state that, on account of the accident, it was impossible to continue the performance. The public accordingly trooped out of the booth.

The clown then returned to Andrée, who had not left her seat. "You can go away now, little one," said he. "It isn't your place here."

"But tell me, Mr. Clown, did the one who fell hurt himself very much?" asked Andrée.

"Oh, no! Only he's going to have his licking. Come, go along."

The darkness was coming on in the empty booth. Outside, the shows and stalls were being lighted up, and through the striped sailcloth one could see the yellow glimmer of their lamps. In the direction of the mountebanks' dressing-room, Andrée heard the Hercules harshly saying: "Here, come here, I must give you your licking." Whereupon, a sobbing, childish

voice replied: "Oh, pray, sir, pray don't beat me to-day; I've so hurt myself."

"A good drubbing will set you right again, you little scamp. Here, take that!"

Then there was a sound of blows, and a child beggingly cried; "Let me off, master, this once; let me off for to-day!"

"There, scamp," rejoined the Hercules, "take that, you clumsy brat, and that, you spoil-trade, and that, you good-for-nothing. That'll teach you to dishonor my company." And at each harsh epithet, one could hear the thud of a blow striking the poor little chap.

"You hear?" said the buffoon to Andrée. "That's how stolen children are treated here. Be off and make haste. Do you want to stop to be whipped? Come, off you go."

Andrée had risen to her feet. She was greatly distressed and wanted to take the buffoon away with her. "Come with me, Mr. Face——"

"Face-to-Smack, out with it; it's no matter. But I can't go. I must stop here."

"But he'll beat you, too."

"Oh, me! It's only for fun; just because the well-dressed folks burst out laughing when they see a clown thrashed. So then I say to the guv'nor: 'Hit again, old man, hit in earnest.' And he gives me a drubbing, enough to break me in two. You see, little one, I must earn my living. By-the-way, where do *you* live? I shan't call on your parents, for I can't go into society. I don't belong to society any longer. I'm a clown, I'm Face-to-Smack, I'm anything you like except somebody."

While speaking the buffoon had taken Andrée's hand, and led her out of the booth. Night was already spreading over the park. The last gleams of sunset were fading away, and the stars peered forth in clustering constellations, twinkling in the far-reaching breadth of celestial space. The buffoon halted and listened. "He has finished beating him. Besides he wouldn't kill his goose with the golden eggs; and he isn't such a brute as he seems."

"I live in the Rue Crozatier," replied Andrée Naviel in answer to the question previously asked of her by her friend, the clown. "Come and see us."

"But I tell you I can't, little one," he replied bitterly. "Only when I pass that way, I'll look at the house. And if you are at the window, I shall see you. But you couldn't recognize me in plain clothes. No matter, I shall see *you*. Come, good-bye. Take the boat near the bridge."

"Good-bye, Mr. Clown," said Andrée.

"Would you do something to please me before we part?"

"Yes."

"Then let me kiss you."

"Willingly."

The clown's tall, slender figure bent down, and he kissed Andrée passionately, with a strange warmth that caused her great emotion. And then he darted off as if he had stolen something, and left her by herself in the vast black park, where the dense shade was scarcely relieved by the gleams of the stalls and the round-abouts, now illuminating for the evening fête.

The exhibitor of the Queen of Beauty stood on the threshold of his traveling cart, and still called out: "Don't pass without seeing Irma. Don't die without seeing Irma, the queen of beauty, who makes every woman jealous, and turns every man's head. Walk up! Walk up! The prettiest girl in the world for two *sous!*"

Andrée again began longing to be Irma, the queen of beauty. This festive scene now being illuminated, the lovers strolling in couples under the shade of the chestnut trees—everything strangely troubled her; even the distant rotation of the round-abouts, where pretty girls leaned back, showing their ankles and laughing merrily, while young swells, astride on the wooden horses, sang *La Fille Angot* in chorus, with shrill voices like those of seraglio guards.

However, Andrée left the park. The Naviels must be alarmed by her disappearance, and she must return home. As she passed in front of the Tête Noir restaurant she heard some one speaking in a private room, and she recognized the voice of the Marquis d'Albigny, who was exclaiming in a loud tone: "Gentlemen, I propose the health of Nana. I drink to the queen of the day!"

The steamboat, coming from Suresnes, was making for the quay to take up fresh passengers. Andrée hastened on board, and soon the boat set off again toward Paris, the growing brightness of which could be distinguished on the horizon.

CHAPTER III.

SHORTLY after this childish freak Andrée's mother took her to work at M. Paillardon's artificial flower establishment, and as she was already a skillful mounter he agreed to pay her at once. Perpetual toil and absolute privation of pleasure, brought about a strange and disquieting phase of pietism in her nature. Her mind took a mystical turn. She spent her spare time in churches, and at vespers on Sundays she was plunged into ecstacy by the fugues of the grand organ, the severe monotony of the psalm singing, and the crystalline purity of the soprano voices soaring above the deep-toned notes of the bassi.

It was with a kind of ethereal sensuality that she inhaled the perfume of the incense as it shrouded the great gold cross on the high altar in blue spirals, rising amid the flashing stained glass windows toward the vaulted roof. The idea of death did not cause her any great alarm. It was evident that the lords of creation must have some other destiny than a mere hole in the ground. She loved to exaggerate the importance of the human "I," and pictured in her mind a world of light, harmony and love, where all lost friends were found again amid the serenity of endless joy. And it was there she would see poor Face-to-Smack again, the ill-used clown, whom the Hercules would beat no longer.

At this thought she was seized with a growing disgust of life, with deep sadness as to her present state, and with an intense longing to fly away elsewhere. She sat for long hours in the work-room without speaking a word to her companions, but living apart in an imaginary world, lost as it were in a disturbing state of spiritualism, and absorbed in a singular kind of bigotry. The other girls derided her, and in this psychological condition, Andrée—isolated by her fancies for the infinite, and yearnings for immortal blessedness—failed to make a single friend among her companions. The latter, who only thought of enjoyment in the present world, called her a little fool, and as she made them no confidential statements they were equally reticent with her. However, M. Paillardin held her in high esteem. She worked more and better than the other girls, displaying all her innate tastefulness and exquisite intuition of nature. Indeed at the end of two years she became the first mounter in the work-room.

She was then approaching her thirteenth birthday. She had suddenly grown and acquired womanly stature. Although still thin and pale owing to the life she led, her form nevertheless began to develop, and swift flashes, like the first gleams of internal fire, darted from under the silken lashes of her big blue eyes. Her hair, of a ruddy, golden tinge, had rapidly grown long, without losing aught of its fine texture. It now fell to her knees, and it was a feast for the eyes to see it roll down in all the splendor of its tawny undulations. She was proud of this true feminine adornment. She had no other wealth than this living gold, which, had she died, she would have besought her mother to cut off and keep in memory of her. However, despite her funereal fancies, vitality affirmed itself by an increase of vigor, her form expanded, and the blood coursed more warmly under her white skin.

When Andrée reached her fourteeth birthday she was no longer a child. She abruptly abandoned the churches she had been so fond of, and her mystical fancies flew away like yellow leaves at the first breeze of autumn. She all at once became

gay, coquettish and fond of admiration, although strictly virtuous. Around her sighed and fluttered a considerable number of clerks, customers and speculators who called on business at the establishment of Messrs. Paillardin & Co., the most prominent artificial flower merchants in the whole Faubourg St. Martin. This sudden success caused great jealousy among her companions, who were furious that all the compliments should be bestowed upon "Mademoiselle Andrée," for she was no longer unceremoniously called "Andrée"; even M. Paillardin, himself, addressed her as "Mademoiselle."

The artificial flower merchant was a hardened bachelor, who, although fifty years of age, still looked at a little distance as if he were yet in the thirties. Merely a few white hairs streaked his thickset whiskers, and his abundant brush-like capillament was barely turning gray. However, the abuse of tobacco had spoilt his teeth, which had assumed a nasty, yellowish tinge. This was the chief sign of physical decay about him. His short, thick hands—with hairy fingers indicative of strength, and nails which he was always biting—flashed with the many diamond rings he wore. He had broad, flat feet and a prominent stomach, and whenever he sat down he kept his thighs far apart so as to spread his hands and his jewels over his massive knees. He had a glutton's face streaked with violet veins, and a short, round nose striated with capillary cells. His prominent under lip bespoke all the appetites of a fast liver, unconquered by five-and-twenty years of work, which had been enlivened, by-the-way, with many a big spread and joyous bout. Withal, not a disagreeable man, generous with women and apt to give them a good deal whenever, on their side, they were disposed to sacrifice everything.

It was one Friday, that he, for the first time, paid any attention to Andrée's beauty. A bridal wreath which was to be delivered the same evening was just ready. The garland of orange blossoms looked very charming and very natural. M. Paillardin had commissioned Andrée to mount it, having absolute confidence in her instinctive taste, and she had disposed the flowers most artistically amid the fresh, twining foliage. Her companions were extremely jealous of the preference shown her, and as they sat around the table they indulged in sundry suggestive witticisms, to which Mademoiselle Naviel and her mother at first paid no attention.

Among the girls present there was a little brunette with bright eyes and sensual lips—said to be Paillardin's mistress, a charge she by no means denied—and whose ready, backbiting tongue exercised great influence over the other girls. She was called Margot, just like a magpie; and what with her artful, little, dark face, her black eyes as piercing as gimlets, and her endless

chatter, the name was by no means misplaced. There was really somewhat of the magpie's cunning and malice about her.

"Don't you think," she suddenly insinuated, "that M. Paillardin made a happy choice in selecting Mademoiselle Andrée to mount the wreath?"

The other girls looked up but refrained from answering this question asked of them point blank, for they knew very well that Margot was quite capable of reporting any criticism to their employer. However, Madame Naviel had heard the brunette, and understood her meaning. "How is that, Margot?" she quietly asked.

"Why it's very simple, Madame Naviel," answered the magpie. "There is only one person here worthy of orange blossom. Isn't that so, my dears?"

This statement did not meet with a favorable reception and there were several protests. "What do you take us for, Margot?" asked some of the bolder girls.

"Oh! come now, you are not hypocritical enough to pretend to be maidens, and I would willingly bet there is only one among us who——"

"Oh, Margot!" interrupted Madame Naviel. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself. The idea of proclaiming before every one that you, yourself——"

"Me? Who's speaking of me? I simply said that there is only one real maiden here; and I didn't say that it wasn't myself."

"What! do you think that Andrée——"

"Pooh! Andrée's only a child as yet, Madame Naviel; let her get a bit older and sharpen her wits. You'll see how she'll grow wings and fly off! But just now I won't say I don't believe in her innocence; and if it were a question of proclaiming her 'rosiere,'* I'd willingly vote in her favor. Besides I'm sure that orange blossom becomes her. Just try on the wreath to see."

Madame Naviel, whose maternal feelings were somewhat hurt, rose from her chair and replied: "Well, we will do so. Put on the wreath Andrée, but first of all unfasten your tresses."

Andrée rapidly loosened her long undulating locks, which fell over her shoulders, and then she set the bridal wreath upon her golden head.

It was the month of June, and the radiant sunlight streamed through three large curtainless windows into the room. Standing in the full light, in the first bloom of maidenhood, Andrée

*The name of rosiere is given to the young girls, who in various French villages are rewarded for their modesty and good conduct with crowns of virtue and small marriage portions.—TRANS.

raised her arms to gather up her hair behind her neck, and the movement showed off her gracefully-curved arms and firmly-set bosom. At this moment M. Paillardin, whom Margot had artfully warned, abruptly entered the room; and at sight of this luminous apparition he stopped short, seized with sudden admiration.

"How old is your daughter?" he asked Madame Naviel.

"Fourteen, Monsieur Paillardin," replied the mother.

"Eh, eh! do you know she almost looks like a young woman? You must be careful now — and particularly so with these girls. I know something about it, and believe me, girls are always ready to corrupt one another. You would do better to trust her to an old rake like myself than to Margot, for instance. Mademoiselle Andrée, I must compliment you. The wreath is perfect, and you deserve a reward. If your mother will allow it, I'll take you to the theater this evening. I have a box for the Bouffes, and after the performance I will drive you home in my carriage."

On hearing this sudden proposal, Madame Naviel hesitated what to answer, and M. Paillardin noticed it. "Come, Madame Naviel," said he, good-naturedly. "Haven't you any confidence in me? You know very well that there are enough girls here and elsewhere, who don't ask better; and I shouldn't be such a rascal as to trifle with a child like your Andrée."

"Margot was enraged, and the others had flushed crimson on hearing their employer's brutal words. Madame Naviel, who felt somewhat reassured, did not dare to refuse for fear of vexing M. Paillardin. And so Andrée speedily hastened home to put on her Sunday clothes.

It was about seven o'clock when she returned. The valet ushered her into the drawing-room and politely requested her to wait a moment. His master, he said, would be ready in less than five minutes. It seemed to Andrée as if she was soaring in a sphere of joy. She was about to ride in a real carriage, and see a play from a private box, for the first time. But then, when the performance was over, would she not see the curtain fall upon the luminous scene, and would not the recollection of a few hours spent among luxurious surroundings make the burden of daily toil unbearable? However, this thought did not linger in her mind, for a servant entered and announced that the brougham was waiting. Paillardin was putting on a pair of light gloves. He had chosen them of the same shade as Andrée's. He called her attention to the point as the carriage whirled away toward the Bouffes, and added: "It's so that people may think you are my little wife. Do you hear, my little beauty? Ah! if you only knew——"

He had unaffectedly passed his arm round Andrée's waist, and

leaning forward, he kissed her on the forehead before she could prevent him.

Andrée had no knowledge of life, and love had not as yet appealed to her mind. She was both mentally and physically a virgin; and so she did not realize her peril when she felt this man's arm around her waist and his hot breath on her cheek. Nature had so far taught her nothing, and Paillardin's audacity barely disturbed her. In her secret heart she, perhaps, felt a coquettish pride at being admired by a wealthy man like himself, with a carriage and servants in livery. Still she knew from Madame Naviel that if a woman wishes to be respected she must put a stop to all amorous enterprises. So, without showing any ridiculous fright, she settled herself in the corner of the carriage.

"You know very well," she said, with a touch of girlish irony, "that I can't be your wife. I'm both too young and too poor for you."

"So my gray hair frightens you, Andrée; but can't you understand that a man of my age loves more and better than another? You are not aware that young fellows especially love their own little persons and their own foolish vanity. If you shared my life, my pretty one — I don't say now, but in two or three years' time — I would engage to settle your parents comfortably, and procure you all the enjoyments of a queen. All Paris would talk about your dresses and your carriages. We would travel about like a pair of lovers, and I would love you like you will never be loved by any one else."

"That dream can't be realized, sir," said Andrée.

The brougham stopped. The footman opened the door and Paillardin alighted the first to offer his hand to the young girl. At that moment a stylish landau, with coachman and footman in a blue livery, drew up close by. A golden-haired woman, extremely beautiful and sparkling with jewels, sprang out onto the asphalt, and took the arm of a well-dressed gentleman with a decoration at his button-hole. Perceiving Andrée standing in the gaslight, in the vestibule of the theater, she looked at her and exclaimed in a loud voice: "Do you see that girl, d'Albigny? She's as much like me as if she were my daughter."

"The deuce," replied d'Albigny. "But if that were the case you might be a grandmother, my dear."

CHAPTER IV.

ANDRÉE immediately raised her head. Where had she seen that golden-haired woman before? At this moment Paillardin leaned toward her and whispered: "That's Nana?"

"Ah! I recollect," murmured the young girl with a shudder.

The first piece had just finished as they reached the grand tier where Paillardin had engaged a four-seat box. Nana on her side occupied a proscenium box with the marquis, and, when she entered, a murmur of admiration ran round the house. Her reign of beauty had lasted for fifteen years already. But time had slipped along without setting its fingers on the devil's masterpiece. Ironical, insolent and fatal, her authority increased each day in the world of vice. She loved D'Albigny as a woman of her kind could love. They were attracted toward each other by their common depravation: D'Albigny completed Nana.

She had ruined the marquis, but he lived in her house, where fêtes were constantly given. And each entertainment was a pretext for gambling, at which D'Albigny and Nana went partners, winning persistently. In fact, the marquis invariably had the most insolent good luck, and he had acquired a perfect reputation for infallibility at the Bourse, where he speculated with Nana's funds, turning them to remarkably good account. The opulent splendor of her mansion had become something fabulous; and ministers, generals, and ambassadors attended her kettledrums, concerts, and charity fêtes. Bent on maintaining her supremacy she had studied music and learned three foreign languages, so that she now sang like Madame Krauss, and could have sold the secrets of France to Bismarck — in German.

During the years which had just elapsed, French society had been afflicted with a terrible disease — the Second Empire. Aristocracy, middle and lower classes, women, men, bodies, consciences, all were venal. Entire Paris might have worn a label bearing the inscription "For Sale." And, meanwhile, Nana's fair head and disturbing smile rose high above the wreck of honesty. It was she, indeed, who set the fashions. Virtuous women imitated her toilets, but without being able to equal her luxury; and no wonder, for China, India, Japan, sent her their most costly fabrics and most precious jewels.

One day a rajah left a million francs' worth of diamonds at her mansion. But she sent them back to him, whereupon he returned and offered her all his jewels, all his wealth; a casket full of black pearls, his priceless aigrette of rubies, his massive gold bracelets studded with emeralds, his flashing rings — everything, indeed, even to his curved saber with its hilt encrusted with sapphires. To please him she laughingly accepted the gift, and a week afterward she turned him out of her house. As for the bracelets, she sold the gold to the Mint to be turned into coinage, and sent the emeralds to Fontana to set them as a diadem.

However, the Empire had come and gone, the Republic had been re-established, and still Nana reigned. Since she had begun to patronize the Bouffes every one followed her there. And this evening the entire house watched her, noting her slightest gestures and ready to acclaim her as if she had been a queen.

It was with a proud smile that she acknowledged the distant bows of the young "mashers" whom she recognized in the stalls, and who had more or less squandered their fortunes at her fêtes. The "real ladies" among the audience tried to imitate this smile of her's, looking at themselves in the mirrors hanging in their boxes. Nana's smile passed indeed like a lightning flash over the assembled spectators, and illuminated even the darkest corners.

Andrée recollected now. She had seen her in the wrestler's booth on the day of her freak at Saint Cloud. And she recognized the gentleman, too, the titled amateur, who had won nine hundred and ninety-five napoleons in the bet, exposed by Face-to-Smack. At thought of Face-to-Smack, the beaten and yet contented clown, so thin and yet so kind, her heart strangely softened. He appeared to her radiant in his white costume. She had long awaited him, thinking each morning that she would see him look up at her window, or pass before the door of the house she lived in, according to his promise; but he had never come. Perhaps he was dead by now! At this idea her heart fairly melted.

M. Paillardin, who was absorbed in his admiration of Nana, forgot Andrée for the time being. His parvenu's blood warmed with brutal adoration for the harlot who was enthroned under a velvet dais, amid a scintillation of jewels, like a madonna crowned with stars. No glasses were levelled at Andrée's simple beauty; but she cared little about this, as she was absorbed in the recollections which the sight of Nana had awakened. "Poor Face-to-Smack!" she muttered. Then suddenly the curtain rose, and her thoughts returned from traveling through the distant past.

All Paris at that time went to see Madame Judic and hear Madame Peschard in the *Timbale d'Argent*. The piece contained a serenade, which Peschard sang remarkably well. As for Judic, she spoke her verses with suggestive reticence and artful by-play, like a school-girl who knows more than she dare confess—and this new style fairly revolutionized the public, which had had a surfeit of musical coarseness and dirty absurdities under the Empire.

Andrée was greatly interested in what took place on the stage, but every now and then Nana attracted her attention. The queen of vice amused herself by emphasizing Judic's success, and called out with an Italian accent: "Brava! Brava! Judic," between each verse. Thanks to her the final stanza was encored.

However, Nana could afford to act generously, for she was sure of her own power. During the *entr'acte*, her box filled with a court of middle-aged, serious-looking men, wearing decorations at their button-holes, and almost all of whom had left some

lady to pay their respects to a harlot. A sensation was caused by the appearance of Stog, the Director of the Postal Service, and the German Prince of Mulhausen, two of Nana's new adorers. They showed a certain stiffness with D'Albigny, who was tolerated, however, on account of his position as "prince consort."

For a minute or two Nina's mind and eyes had been absorbed in contemplation of Andrée. "Who are you looking at like that, my dear?" asked the marquis.

"At that young girl over there — beside that stout fellow. You know who I mean — the girl who came in at the same time as us. I am greatly puzzled by her likeness to myself."

Nana's courtiers immediately directed their attention to Paillardin's box, and D'Albigny exclaimed: "'Pon my word, it's true."

At once the whole house turned toward the young girl. Heads and glasses were raised, and an electric current of admiration sped through this assembly of blasés. Andrée felt somewhat intimidated, and drew back so as to be less in view. Shortly afterward, however, there came a discreet knock at the box door, which Paillardin went to open. On the threshold stood the box-opener with a huge bouquet of white roses in her hand. "I was requested to give these flowers to this young lady," said the woman.

Andrée blushed.

"Oh! You can take them, little one," observed Paillardin. "They don't engage you to anything. They are simply an homage to your beauty, besides," he added, drawing his head up, "I'm here to protect you."

Andrée, who had risen, accepted the bouquet, leaned forward to inhale its perfume, and then sat down again, in view of the audience. Her hair now flashed with renewed brilliancy amid the golden light shed by the great luster, her deep eyes glistened, and as she raised her head she seemed transfigured by the pleasure she derived from the mute homage of these budding roses, the symbols of her youth.

Thereupon Nana raised her dainty hands and applauded with her tapering, gold-spanned fingers. She even repeated in a loud voice the remark she had previously made: "It's astonishing. One might take her for my daughter."

The whole house heard the words, and there was a growing hum which sped from mouth to mouth, ascending from the stalls to "paradise." "Nana's daughter!" repeated the swell occupants of the boxes. "Nana's daughter!" the friezes re-echoed.

"'Pon my word, she's like her?" exclaimed a masher who was ogling Andrée with an arrogant air.

Even the women leaned forward to see her, and made comparisons aloud. Bare shoulders with velvety sheen were displayed

in the full light. And feminine comments in silvery voices could be heard amid the buzz of the swells in dress clothes.

The enthusiasm which Andrée awakened, and which to Paillardin's mind reflected somewhat on himself, made him jealously gallant again. In his heart the fat fellow was bursting with satisfied vanity. He assumed all sorts of love-sick attitudes, and approached very close to Andrée so as to whisper highly-spiced things in her ear. The suggestive witticisms of the piece had enlivened him, and Andrée's success was fanning his flame. He spoke the language of an ex-woman-killer and vaguely alarmed the child, whose protector he wished to seem. However, Andrée laughed without understanding him, and her charming laughter lent her a flash of gay vivacity which increased her seductive power. Little by little she became enervated and felt herself enveloped, penetrated by the breath of corrupting admiration. A kind of hallucination made her find everything good and beautiful. Even Paillardin appeared to be transfigured, and, in spite of his blotched, apoplectical face, she no longer thought him either so ugly or so old. He had had sufficient influence over her to induce her to accept that bouquet, and now he was saying things which she ought not to have heard.

Suddenly, however, there came a loud knock at the box door.

"Who's there?" asked Paillardin, impatiently.

"It's I, Pierre Naviel," replied a gruff voice.

"My father!" exclaimed Andrée, and she blushed as if she were in fault.

A workman with an energetic bronzed face, a broad shouldered colossus with frank eyes and a smile of cordial honesty, stood in the light of the passage outside. "I've come to fetch you, my girl," he said to Andrée.

The curtain was about to rise again for the third act, and Andrée would have very much liked to stay.

"No," added Pierre Naviel with gentle firmness. "It isn't your place here, and your mother was wrong——"

On hearing this, Paillardin wished to intervene.

"Excuse me, sir," observed the workman, "my girl owes you all obedience in the work-room, but elsewhere it's for her father to decide."

Andrée thereupon rose up and followed Pierre Naviel, carrying away with her the beautiful bouquet of white roses, the trophy of her ephemereal triumph. She felt a pang of regret as she passed down the street and saw the brougham waiting. She thought of this first success she owed to her beauty, and with which she was still intoxicated. But suddenly a disturbing thought occurred to her: Whom had the crowd acclaimed? Was it Andrée Naviel?

No; it was Nana's daughter!

CHAPTER V.

When the petals began to fall from the bouquet of white roses, standing on the chest of drawers, Andrée decided to remove the faded flowers and cut the ribbon which bound them together. As she did so a card fell out—a card bearing the name, "Lucien Despretz," with these words written underneath: "To virtuous beauty!" Whence came this advice disguised as a compliment? She could not tell. But at all events her unknown admirer offered his perfumed homage to Andrée Naviel, and not to Nana's daughter.

She preciously stowed the card away in the little box where she kept her secrets, and preserved the petals of the faded roses in a drawer. Who could this Lucien Despretz be? She knew no one of that name. She pictured to herself a lover as handsome as some hero of romance—an imaginary Lucien Despretz, who, according to her fancy, in turn assumed different forms. Now he was an officer in a brilliant uniform, tall, with a proud bearing, and curling black mustaches. Now again he was some young writer or man of science destined to achieve celebrity, and she pictured him with his head slightly bowed in thought, with long hair waving back off his lofty brow, and a tawny beard trimmed to a point.

But soon, thanks to her active life of toil, her imagination sobered down, and the visions vanished. She grew stouter, and bloomed in all the pride of youthful beauty. On going up and down the stairs she had sometimes met a young man of twenty-four or thereabouts, with closely-cropped hair and a light curly beard. He had a gentlemanly appearance, with clear, honest eyes, and a frank, kind smile, saddened somewhat, perhaps, by a shade of bitterness at the corners of the mouth. She had not remarked anything particular about this young man, save that he was tall and slight of build, and always bowed to her most politely, drawing aside as soon as he perceived her, so as to let her pass. She knew that he lived on the same flat as herself, with his mother, who was always dressed in black, and whom she also sometimes met, but she was ignorant even of their name.

One evening, however, as she was returning home from the work-room, she espied a card nailed on her neighbor's door. The house porter had just lighted the gas, and Andrée glanced at the name upon the card. She recognized it at once, and experienced great emotion. So it was he, the unknown admirer, who had sent her those flowers, that evening at the Bouffes! The slim young man with the fair beard and the short-cropped hair was named Lucien Despretz.

That name had illuminated her girlish reveries for days and

weeks and months; but little by little it had faded from her quieted mind. Now, however, the old dreams returned transformed, having assumed a definite shape, and she never met Lucien Despretz afterward, without feeling that a blush was mantling over her face. There was no other change in her life. The young fellow never spoke to her. Only once did he venture to smile as he politely made her his customary bow. But as Mademoiselle Naviel did not return the smile he became more and more respectful. One day, even Andrée thought she noticed that he turned pale as he passed beside her.

Pierre Naviel willingly allowed his daughter any harmless enjoyment; and for Andrée's sake he tried to acquire a liking for high art. At winter time he treated her to the Théâtre Français, and the Opéra Comique, and in the summer he took her into the environs with her mother. They sat down in some garden-restaurant overlooking the river, and partook of fried gudgeon freshly fished from the Seine, and washed down with a bottle of light wine. When the day waned they set off home, with their limbs tired, but their mind at rest, and they willingly loitered to admire the serene splendor of evening, the fading ruddiness of the sky, and the changeful, moire-like aspect of the river, flowing silently along amid the peace of sunset. On these occasions they often took the steamboat from Bas-Meudon to the Point d'Austerlitz, which they crossed on their way home.

One Sunday, at the end of October, they started off early in the morning to spend a last day at Bellevue. After a month's rain, the sun had deigned to show itself, and the sear and yellow wood was impregnated with moist heat. The swallows had started southward, but a few songsters were warbling their last autumnal lays. The Naviels bought some ham, bread, wine and pears at Bellevue, and climbed as far as the keeper's lodge. And then came the last picnic of the year on the leaf-strewn grass. Before evening had set in, they descended the slope toward the boat, for Madame Naviel had noticed that Andrée had been coughing slightly, and she mistrusted the dew which falls after sunset. It was nearly seven o'clock when they landed at the Point d'Austerlitz. The glare had long since faded from the clouds, and a dense fog was hovering over the Seine. The massive, square towers of Notre Dame rose up above the mist, which soared but slowly from the river, and assumed strange, spectral forms, winding procession-like around the cathedral. In vain did the gas-lighters ignite the lamps upon the quays, they barely glimmered amid the white vapor, and police agents had to station themselves on the bridges with flaring torches.

The Naviels were half-way across the Point d'Austerlitz when a tall, slim fellow ran past them. Suddenly the sound of his footsteps ceased, and from the depths of the fog Andrée heard a stifled cry, and then the splash of a body falling into the water.

Pierre Naviel heard the sound as well. "Wait for me a minute!" said he to his wife and daughter, and, hurrying away in the direction which the man had taken, he soon disappeared in the fog.

Torches could be seen hurrying along the quay, and a buzz of voices was wafted through the mist. Andrée distinctly heard some one exclaim, "It's here," whereupon another person asked: "How many are they?" and the first voice replied, "There are two of them."

"Throw the life buoys from the landing stage!" exclaimed another person.

"Ay, that's it. Make haste, for heaven's sake."

"Torches here! Torches here! The river's smoking, one can't see anything."

"Now's the time for you fellows who know how to swim. But they must have gone to the bottom. One can't hear anything more."

"No, no; I can see something over there beyond the landing stage."

"What, in this fog? You must have fine eyes, and no mistake."

Exclamations arose and intermingled on all sides, but no one dared devote himself for fear of being lost in the river amid the fog. "Well, it's all over!" said some one who passed near Andrée. "All they will need now is a slab at the Morgue."*

"What a set of cowards!" cried Andrée. "What, isn't there one among them who will try to save my father? Well, I'll set them the example, then."

Madame Naviel raised a frightened cry and tried to detain her daughter; but Andrée freed herself and hastened down the steps leading to the pontoons. Obedient only to the dictates of her heart, she was about to spring into the water, when she heard her father calling to her from above the quay. "Andrée! Andrée! Stop, my girl! I'm saved!"

The voice was coming nearer, but such was Andrée's emotion that she fell fainting on the quay. In three bounds Pierre Naviel was down the steps. He stopped, caught his daughter up in his arms, and as she opened her eyes, he asked: "Unfortunate child! What could you be thinking of?"

"I wanted to—join you," replied Andrée, in a trembling voice.

Madame Naviel, who had followed her husband, now drew near, and the young girl speedily recovered her strength. "It's nothing," she said. "I can walk now. Let us go." Then she

* The establishment where the bodies of unknown people are exhibited for purposes of identification in cases of death by accident, suicide or murder.—[TRANS.]

took her father's arm, and as they climbed the steps again, "Where is that poor fellow?" she asked.

"Up there, on a bench. He's being attended to. Do you know, he positively wouldn't help me to save him. He kept on saying, 'Let me die! Let me die! I want to drown myself, for I've nothing to eat.' Meantime he was drinking, and though I tried my best, he was so long and lanky that he kept on sinking like a bit of lead——"

"Let us go and see how he's getting on," said Andrée. "I feel better now." And she drew herself up so that her father might think her all right again.

"Very well; let us go. The poor devil interests me," said Naviel. "Come along, wife."

When they reached the bench where Pierre had handed the the half-drowned man over to the care of a passing doctor, they found the unfortunate fellow sitting pale and shivering amid a circle of sight-seers. "May I ask you to be charitable, gentlemen, to this poor man, who's hungry?" said Andrée, in her soft, winning voice; and taking her father's hat, she made the round of the circle.

When she returned in front of the poor devil, he stared at her with widely-dilated eyes, by the light of a street lamp near the bench. "What, is it you? Excuse me, mademoiselle," he stammered. "But how you've grown since the fête at St. Cloud."

Andrée gazed at this tall, slim, haggard man, and a distant recollection was awakened in her mind.

"Don't you recognize Face-to-Smack, mademoiselle? You are too old now. You wouldn't let the poor clown kiss you as you did."

"What! is it really you?" said Andrée. "Father, this is the good fellow I told you about. If it hadn't been for him I should, perhaps, be a tight-rope dancer nowadays."

All the sterling worth of her heart was revealed by that confession. And yet the man before her was no longer her old mountebank, who had looked so funny in his loose clown's dress. His misery was suggestive of acute bitterness and self-abandonment. His unkempt hair of equal length fell, raggedly, over his shoulders, and his bushy, clotted beard of a yellowish white told a painful story of indigence. However, Pierre Naviel hailed a cab, and the old clown, to whom Andrée had just handed the collection money, was told to get inside. Twenty minutes later the Naviels reached home, accompanied by poor Face-to-Smack, still shivering with cold and hunger. But Andrée at once found some dry clothes, and the ex-mountebank was taken by Pierre into the bedroom to put them on, while Madame Naviel lighted a big fire and laid the table.

While they supped, the rescued man told his story in a

piteous tone. It was the familiar odyssey of all those who, after losing caste, sink deeper and deeper into the substrata of Parisian life. At times in the course of this despairing confession, there came phrases of regret, not destitute of dignity. At one moment, for instance, he alluded to his child. "She would be of your age, mademoiselle," he said to Andrée. "And she would be pretty, too, I'm sure of it. And I — I shouldn't be so miserable; I should have some courage, then, and I should work ——"

"No doubt, no doubt, comrade; a man must work," observed Pierre Naviel. "He's nothing without work. If you liked, one might try to get you engaged as a salesman or a messenger by M. Paillardin, for you don't seem built for foundry work otherwise——"

"Thank you, sir, I know how to write and cipher; I was a bookkeeper once upon a time and I had an honorable position. Well, I lost it through my own fault. I was mad about that woman who's now so well known in Paris, what with her horses and luxury and lackeys and so on, which everybody pays for. Ah! I was a thief for her — yes, a thief! It's the truth. I wanted to put the money back in the safe, but before I could do so she had me locked up, the wretch. And the money was meant for our baby. Ah, Heavens! You can't say I wasn't right to drown myself. Yesterday I met the governor — you know, the Hercules — and he advanced me a franc to get myself shaved and turn Face-to-Smack again. I took the coin, but you see how I'm shaved. And so with my poodle mug I don't dare go to the booth for he might pull my beard off."

"What did you do with his money then?" asked Naviel.

"I drank it, sir, to get up courage to drown myself. But I shan't begin a second time. I know where I intend to go to-morrow. Excuse me, mademoiselle, I feel very happy to have seen you again — and now I'm off."

The Naviels did not try to detain him; but Andrée conducted him onto the landing. Scarcely was the door opened, however, than he stopped short on the threshold and gazed with dilated eyes at the card affixed to the door opposite. Then, without a word, he suddenly bolted down the stairs, scampering away as if a ghost had been behind him.

CHAPTER VI.

When the winter was over, as soon as the eyes of the branches began to sprout, the pleasure parties began again. The rose "mounters" employed by Messrs. Paillardin & Co. were in the habit of spending the first spring Sunday together in the country, and that year Andrée was invited. Her mother made no objection, and so she accepted, being greatly delighted with the

prospect of this April ramble. She had not found the winter very lively, for the Seine had overflowed, and the inundation had reached the foundry where Pierre worked. As the furnaces were extinguished, and nearly a month's enforced idleness followed, the Naviels were obliged to forego their Sunday visits to the theater, and even to content themselves with short commons.

But they courageously put up with these privations; and, as easy circumstances returned with the spring, Andrée's parents were unwilling to refuse her the enjoyment of a day's free gaiety in the fields. Only, when she was ready to start, Pierre Naviel accompanied her to the door, and kissing her on the forehead, he exclaimed: "Amuse yourself, Andrée, but promise me that if your employer's there, you will find some suitable excuse to come home at once."

"I promise it, father."

"I rely on you, my girl; for, to tell the truth, I don't put any faith in Paillardin. I've good reasons for that, and your mother has told me enough to show me what kind of chap he is."

At the foot of the stairs, Andrée met the young man, her neighbor, who seemed to be waiting for her. For the last two months they had spoken to each other when they met on the stairs. M. Lucien Despretz inquired with respectful interest after Mademoiselle Andrée's health, and Andrée asked him for news of his widowed mother. On Sunday mornings, too, when Madame Despretz went out marketing, she sometimes met Madame Naviel, and on these occasions they talked housekeeping together. Their connection had not yet gone any farther, however. They did not call on one another. Their meetings were strictly limited to the street, the stairs, or the landing.

But on that Sunday morning it seemed to Andrée as if M. Lucien Despretz approached her with a kind of premeditation. "You are going out, mademoiselle?" he asked, after inquiring about her health.

"Yes, I am going into the country; and you?"

"Oh! I'm not going anywhere — and yet, if you would allow me to accompany you a short distance, I shouldn't be sorry to speak to you of a serious matter."

"Willingly," replied Andrée, "I am going to the St. Lazare station to meet some of the girls of our work-room. If you will come there with me, we can talk on the way."

"Is it far where you intend to spend the day?"

"Between Rueil and LaMalmaison. Margot, one of our girls, is going to take us to dine at the house of an uncle of hers. He has a house and garden there, it seems, and while he's away she has the keys, with permission to gather any fruit. However, we are all going to take something with us, and I mean to buy a *terrine de foie gras* in the Rue St. Lazare. The others

will bring what they like. Margot supplies the dessert and even the wine."

"I am delighted by the frankness with which you give me all this information, Mademoiselle Andrée. Will you take my arm, if you don't find me too tall for you?"

"Not at all. I like tall men," she answered, taking the young fellow's arm.

They crossed the Place de la Bastile without saying anything, and began to follow the line of the boulevards. Paris wore its Sunday aspect. The sun had risen very bright for the occasion, and the shops were shut. Overhead, the windows were opening, and women in morning négligés, and with uncombed hair, looked into the street. Here and there a bare white arm was stretched out to fasten a shutter back, secure a Venetian blind, or water a favorite flower; and as one or another of these movements was executed, a nicely-rounded elbow peered forth from a short, loose sleeve. From time to time, on the balconies aloft, some minor functionary of the public services, in a dressing-gown and a fez, could be seen smoking his pipe while he perused the *Vie Parisienne*, or some equally serious newspaper. On the pavement whole families, rigged out in their Sunday best, were camping outside the dram-shops, or walking in noisy parties toward the railway stations.

"Would you allow me to tell you my opinion of the uncle of Mademoiselle Margot, whom I have not the honor of knowing, by the way?" asked Lucien Despretz of Andrée.

"What is it, pray?"

"That he is no more her uncle than I am.'

"What is he, then?"

"Her protector, mademoiselle; just as your employer, M. Paillardin, aspired to become yours—that evening at the Bouffes when I was present. And that woman who almost succeeded in passing you off as her daughter! And that crowd of fools who only noticed you because Nana did so! And that fat porpoise Paillardin, who revelled in your success! Ah! what a bitter memory I retain of that evening, though perhaps it gave you pleasure. It is only natural that such a beautiful young girl as yourself should be fond of homage."

"I am not ugly, sir, I know it; but, believe me, homage only pleases me according to its worth. And on the evening you speak of, what most pleased me, what made me very happy, was M. Lucien Despretz's bouquet and the few words that accompanied it. That proved to me that the unknown friend who sent it had guessed that Andrée Naviel could have nothing in common with the woman you allude to."

"So my bouquet pleased you, then?"

"Yes, very much indeed, and I kept it a very long, long time;

and when the petals fell, I placed them in a drawer to scent my linen. Come, smell my handkerchief."

A bright smile of happiness passed over Lucien's face. "Thank you, mademoiselle," he said with some emotion in his voice. "That will compel you to think of me."

"By the way, what was the serious matter you wished to speak to me about?"

"Forgive me if I hesitate, Mademoiselle Andrée. If I do so, it is because the happiness of my life is at stake."

"Why do you put on such a serious air with me? True, I am perhaps rather childish, and I may not be able to understand what you have to tell me, or to answer you. However, speak."

"I wish to ask your parents for your hand, Mademoiselle Andrée; but, before doing so, I must solicit your permission. It was to tell you this that I waited for you, as I knew you were going out."

"Then listen to me, Monsieur Lucien. Before marrying I wish to *know* the man who is to be my husband. I shall not be guided by his looks or his fortune. What I ask is that he shall be good, honest, and capable of always loving me. Now I don't know you, and I can make you no promise. Tell my father of your intentions and ask his permission to visit us. Come and see us with your mother, we shall know each other better, and we shall soon see if our tastes and characters agree. I have never loved any one, and it only depends on you to be the first and the last in my heart."

This frank and serious conversation had occupied considerable time, for there were intervals of silence when they paused to reflect, and the words came but slowly from their lips, as they wished to weigh them. Lucien was anxious not to offend or alarm Andrée by a too boldly worded avowal of his love; and she, on her side, coquettishly tried to say just sufficient to leave him some hope, but not too much. Ignorant as she was of her own heart she did not wish him to be over-confident.

They had now reached the St. Lazare station, and Andrée purchased a *terrine de foie gras* before going in. Lucien Despretz took leave of her at the foot of the steps, at the top of which her companions were waiting. It was five minutes to ten by the outside clock, so the girls made haste to take their return tickets; and ten minutes later the train was on the way to Rueil. They had decided to ride outside,‖ and as gay as a party of holiday-bound school-girls they enjoyed the fresh breeze which reddened their cheeks, and the swaying motion of the blind force which carried them swiftly onward. It was half-past ten when they reached Rueil, where for three sous they took the *bijou*

‖ For the benefit of the reader who has not traveled in France, it may be mentioned that on the Paris suburban railway lines, the carriages have an upper story only roofed and provided with wooden seats, but open on either side.—[TRANS.]

train of four miniature carriages which journeys along a toy line to Port Marly. At La Malmaison they alighted, and Margot guided her friends for a short distance till they reached a palisade bordering the road. There was a door which she opened, and the whole party entered a large oblong garden plentifully planted with pear trees. At the farther end stood two pavillions, one on either hand, and both of them surrounded with clusters of standard roses.

"We shall dine there," said Margot, pointing to the pavilion on the right-hand side. "And we may as well take our provisions there at once. My uncle's servant will lay the table, and everything will be ready when we return from the garden."

They walked to the pavilion and entered a large but simply furnished dining-room. There was but one object that attracted Andrée's attention, and that was a tumbler on the side-board. It has been used this same morning, no doubt, and had been forgotten there. Andrée approached to look at it, and when she perceived the initial engraved on one side of it she could not forbear shuddering. It was the first letter of Paillardin's name.

CHAPTER VII.

At about six o'clock, when the daylight was already waning, the girls sat down to supper. The sun was slowly sinking behind the woods, and the pear trees cast long tapering shadows across the weedy pathways. A gust of wind passed by, bending the poplars beside the river, which was suddenly creased with ripples as bright as silver scales. In the rear, behind Marly, a red cloud stood out like a stain of blood on the pale azure sky. With the exception of Andrée all the girls were very merry. Margot poured out the wine, and all the glasses now proved to be plain ones. Curiously enough, the tumbler with the engraved initial had disappeared. A petroleum lamp had been lighted by Margot, and stood in the center of the table which it barely sufficed to illuminate.

"That lamp of yours gives no light at all," said one of the girls, "I thought you had another one; where is it?"

"Over the way, of course! You know, my dears, we are going to have some champagne at supper. My uncle pays for it, so let us drink his health." With these words Margot deftly uncorked a bottle and filled the glasses.

"To the health of the uncle who stands champagne!" cried all the girls in chorus.

Andrée was tortured by an ardent thirst, and she allowed Margot to fill her glass three or four times in quick succession. A hectic flush speedily rose to her cheeks, and surrounding objects assumed a fantastic aspect in her imagination. Her

companions also soon began to feel the effects of the effervescent beverage. Their clear girlish laughter rose gaily above the clatter of the forks and plates, and mingled with the detonations of the champagne corks which Margot loosened with diabolical zest. Just as the dessert had been served a general cry arose. "Come, Margot, sing us the *timbale!*"

"All right, my dears. In honor of Andrée Naviel then, the pretty novice, and only real rosière here," rejoined Paillardin's favorite, springing onto the table. And then with an exaggerated tremolo worthy of a music-hall prima donna, she began to sing Judic's verses in the *Timbale d'Argent*:

"High upon the greasy pole,
The prize of virtue hangs!"

Tapping on their glasses with their knives, the other girls duly took up the chorus, shouting at the top of their voices:

"Another one who can't climb up!
Another one who's missed the cup!"

But all this orgy-like mirth began to sadden Andrée, and when the song was over she remarked that it was time to start, as they had taken return tickets, and besides, so far as she herself was concerned, it was absolutely necessary she should go home. A general burst of laughter greeted her remark. "We are going to sleep here, my dear Andrée," said Margot, "and we only took return tickets to let you imagine we intended to go home this evening."

"You can stop if you choose, but as for myself, I'm going home."

"Go home, my dear; go home, my child," rejoined Margot, waxing maternal under the influence of the champagne.

"What has been done with my mantel and my hat?" asked Andrée.

"They are over there, in the other pavilion," sneered Paillardin's favorite.

Andrée went out into the garden, and found that big drops of rain were beginning to fall. An opaque veil had gradually shrouded the sky while the dinner was progressing, and now the black clouds sped swiftly over the wood of larches, hanging so low that they semed to touch the tree-tops. A steam tug, which was puffing up the river near Croissy, suddenly rent the air atwain with a hoarse signal like the alarm cry of some wild beast. Andrée saw a light in the pavilion which Margot had designated, and, thinking that the gardener of the property lived there, she hastened toward it. Her heart was beating fast, and she seemed to divine some imminent, mysterious

danger which might blast her very life. Still a strange and forcible temerity urged her to risk everything. The cold evening air increased the passing derangement of her faculties. Heated for the moment before, she now experienced a reaction; she shivered, her limbs quaked, and at moments she fancied that the old pear trees made strange gesticulations and marched toward her in a line like sharpshooters.

At a few paces from the pavilion she stopped short and shuddered, as she had done that morning on seeing the initialed glass. A window on the first floor was lighted up and a shadow was constantly passing to and fro — the shadow of a portly man. "Bah!" said Andrée at last. "It surely can't be he. And besides what have I to fear? Am I not sure of myself? Didn't I once pass a whole evening alone with him? He is said to be a libertine and yet he has never harmed me. Men like M. Paillardin don't trifle with *virtuous* women. I am really very foolish to have these fancies. Besides, if he were here, he would have dined with us."

On reaching the pavilion she knocked, but no answer came. The door was ajar, however, and pushing it open she found herself at the foot of a narrow staircase, over the upper steps of which there played a ray of light. Andrée resolutely began to climb the stairs, but she had scarcely taken a few steps before she heard the house-door close behind her. Then from the lighted landing overhead, a voice called out: "Come up, my dear, come up;" and as she raised her eyes she saw Paillardin above her. He was smiling, and his smile suddenly changed into a loud sardonic laugh which shook his bulky frame. It was now too late to retreat, so Andrée assumed an air of confidence and went up onto the landing.

"I have come to fetch my mantle and my hat, as I'm going home," she quietly said.

"Going home in such weather as this? I can never consent to that, my dear."

"My parents are waiting for me."

"Oh dear, no. Margot telegraphed to them that you would sleep here."

"It is impossible, sir," said Andrée in a firm voice.

"Excuse me, pretty one; and come in here," rejoined Paillardin, motioning the young girl to what appeared to be his bedchamber.

"I shall not enter your room," was her reply.

"You surely don't intend to pass the night on the stairs?"

"I wish to leave this house."

"But the door's shut and you are caught, my dove. For I must tell you that this pleasure party was only arranged to bring you here. Your companions are all jealous of you, and they

can't understand why you should be so prudish with your employer, when they are just the contrary."

"This trap is unworthy of an honest man, Monsieur Paillardin, but I declare to you that if you dare to touch me I shall be avenged."

"By whom, pray?"

"By my father."

"Your father! Why you won't dare to tell him anything, and if you did, he wouldn't venture to create a scandal for fear of injuring your reputation. And besides, let him try it; I shall turn you and your mother out of my establishment at once. Now, if you don't want to be carried, walk in."

Andrée measured the extent of her peril. A virtuous girl, she did not know exactly to what depths of degradation this man might try to reduce her, but she realized that it was a question for her to be or not to be. At this thought she made up her mind and took a terrible resolution. From across the garden the wind wafted the strains of Margot and her companions who were ironically singing Madame Judic's song:

"See, down she slips despite her tries,
Another one has lost the prize!"

Andrée heard them, but she heeded not; and strong in her resolve, she quietly entered Paillardin's room.

In front of the window stood a bedstead surmounted by a baldaquin with curtains of blue damask lined with yellow silk. All around, the panels were adorned with tall mirrors resting on marble consoles with legs of gilt woodwork in the Louis Quinze style. On a chest of drawers, in a corner, stood a lighted lamp similar to that which illuminated the orgy of the flower girls. The latter were, no doubt, regaling themselves with some punch, for their window was now lighted by a flickering bluish glimmer.

Paillardin locked the door and then advanced toward Andrée, who was standing behind an arm-chair, between the chest of drawers and the bedstead. "You must surely understand, my pretty one, that it is useless for you to resist," he said. "The house is isolated; at a hundred yards from a road which nobody passes along at this time of night. Your companions are my accomplices moreover; everything favors me, so why resist? I have long thought you adorable, Andrée; I have long waited for this occasion. Come, what would be the use of trying to struggle against me? It wouldn't last for long——"

"I have nothing to say to you, sir, except that you are a coward, and that I loathe you."

"I don't mind about that, Andrée. I knew very well that you would give some such answer when I told you of my love, which

has been so humble and respectful so far. But there is an end to everything you know, and I am determined on it, you shall not spurn me any longer. I have the right to command here, and strength is on my side——"

"Dare to touch me, scoundrel that you are!" cried Andrée, who was very pale, but whose eyes flashed fire.

"Scoundrel! Insults! You are not wanting in bravado for a child of your age," cried Paillardin, whose face was violet with concentrated fury. "We will see about your resistance!" he added with an oath, and wresting away the arm-chair which Andrée was clutching hold of, he sprung forward like a wild beast.

But with the strength which her despair imparted to her, the young girl succeeded in eluding his grasp, and ere he renewed the attack, she seized hold of the petroleum lamp, standing on the drawers, and hurled it at him.

Paillardin was struck in the chest. The lamp glass was shivered, and as the petroleum poured over his shirt it suddenly began to blaze. The scoundrel roared with pain. The flames lapped his stomach and covered his thighs; and demented by terror and suffering alike, he threw himself on the bed vainly hoping to stifle the fire. But as he rolled about in a convulsion of alarm the curtains became ignited, a flame shot up to the baldaquin, and the drapery fell upon him like a fiery shroud.

"Help, Andrée! help! call!" gasped the wretched sufferer, hoping, in his desperation, for succor from his intended victim.

Andrée sprang to the window and opened it. But she did not call for help. A sturdy old vine climbed up the wall, and with its assistance she leaped into the garden.

She had not made her escape too soon, for the fire was spreading through the room. Paillardin had fallen from the bed onto the floor and writhing in atrocious agony, he shrieked unintelligible words. The whole of his bulky frame was burning with a white flame and a black smoke. His beard and hair blazed for a second, then his cheeks took fire, and as the flesh became detached from the bones, one might have seen his teeth biting his tongue, the tip of which was carbonized.

However, his cries had been heard, and people were approaching. When the work-girls, whose heads were already turned by their unlimited potations, saw the flames darting through the open window of their employer's room, they fled down the garden in dismay shrieking, "Fire! Fire!" Some belated passers-by were at hand, and leaning a ladder against the widow-sill, they emptied buckets full of water into the burning room. The fire, indeed, was soon extinguished, but Paillardin had long been dead. As for Andrée, she had disappeared.

That same night the commissary of police of Rueil started an investigation. Two of the work-girls, who had abetted Pail-

lardin's design, were arrested at the railway station, and, while trying to screen themselves, they confessed that a conspiracy had been planned against Mademoiselle Naviel. The door of the pavilion, where the fire had taken place, was found to be shut, and the window of the bedroom open. It was presumed therefore, that the young girl — surprised and shut up in the building — had made her escape by way of the casement, at the outset of the fire. Moreover, some abominable reports were abroad respecting Paillardin — stories of other young girls whom he had drawn to this same pavilion; and when the judicial authorities had duly weighed the evidence, they decided not to trouble Andrée Naviel.

CHAPTER VIII.

During the summer which followed Paillardin's tragical demise, the acquaintanceship of the Despretz and Naviel families was established on a cordial footing. It was not so easy for them to see one another, as the Naviels had left the Faubourg St. Antoine, and taken up their abode at Batignolles. But the distance was shortened by the barely-confessed affection which united Andrée and Lucien. Andrée had set up in business on her own account, and had no lack of customers. She had grown far more womanly, and conducted her work-room with rare skill. Her beauty was becoming more graceful and noble, and her eyes seemed larger and deeper under the influence of the feelings by which she was now swayed.

Lucien Despretz had by degrees revealed to her all his long-cherished dreams of love and happiness, all his plans for the future when they would be man and wife. And Andrée had begun to love him with a strong, honest affection; it was she who the first felt anxious to shorten the term of probation. Lucien had not as yet formally asked for her hand. With pardonable pride he wished to improve his position, and place it on a level with his sweetheart's. He had become cashier at a large establishment in the Rue Montmartre, but this did not suffice for his ambition. His old mother was dependent on him, and he wished to lay by enough to enable her to live in comparative independence after his marriage. With this object he underwent positive privations. He did not think fit to inform Andrée of the honorable motives which delayed his formal application to her parents, for he knew her well enough to judge that she would wish to have her share in his task of filial devotion. And so they lived on, in a kind of semi-reserve, due to the delicate susceptibility of their natures. There was something charming about their mutual reticence, and their love

appeared to their parents like the cordial friendship of two young people, glad to meet and see each other.

Madame Naviel alone was desirous that Lucien should state his views concerning Andrée; and, one evening, when the work-girls had left before Naviel returned from the foundry, she spoke very seriously to her daughter on the subject—urging her to have an explanation with M. Despretz as soon as possible. Unfortunately, she allowed some cruel words to escape her. "If he delays so long," she said, "it is perhaps because he has some doubts respecting your adventure with Monsieur Paillardin."

"That's impossible, mother!" cried Andrée. "However, I will speak to him to-morrow, since we are all going to the review in the Bois de Boulogne. And he must tell me the plain truth."

Andrée did not sleep that night, but passed long hours crying; and on the morrow her eyes still bore traces of the tears which had risen from her heart. At eleven o'clock Lucien Despretz and his mother reached Batignolles by the omnibus from the Bastille; and shortly afterward the two families sallied forth and took the train for Passy. A compact crowd was besieging the carriages, and every five minutes a fresh train steamed up, with passengers cramming every corner, even to the gangways leading to the outside seats.

On alighting at Passy, Andrée did not wait for Lucien to offer her his arm; she appropriated it and led him several steps onward, in advance of the others. They turned down a narrow path where the noontide heat had barely penetrated. Despite the glowing sunlight, the mirth of the crowd, and the ambient joy around, a vague sadness, one of those light clouds familiar to young natures, had fallen over them. When they were parted from their relatives, Andrée raised her fair head, and, looking questioningly at her lover with her deep limpid eyes, she asked: "So you do not believe in the virtue of women, Monsieur Lucien?"

"Who told you that, Andrée? I do believe that there are virtuous women, and especially since I know you."

"Come, answer me frankly. Suppose that, on the night of that adventure with my old employer, I had fallen a victim to the trap he set for me——"

"Enough, Andrée. Not another word. Don't try to make me doubt. I believe in your purity as I believe in my dear mother's honor. Do you fancy I could live with such a pang at the heart? No, no, the only woman I have ever loved cannot have fallen a victim to Paillardin. If you told it me, Andrée, you yourself, I should not believe you."

"And yet if it were so?"

"I should not cease to esteem and love you, as long as I had

courage enough to live; but I should bid good-by to my hopes — for fear of making your life an endless torture by my jealousy."

"Thank you for your frankness. I trust that you have a sufficiently high opinion of my delicacy to know that I should have begged you to renounce your hopes had my adventure resulted in my fall."

"And you would have acted rightly, Andrée, for the man who gives himself wholly to the woman he loves, the man whose love has had no past, and who comes to his betrothed and says: 'Here I am with all my illusions, all my dreams, all my kisses. I come to you, take me, my life is yours, my past as well as my future. I have not squandered aught of the treasures in my heart, I have not cast eyes on any woman save yourself ——' Ah! that man, Andrée, the man who can speak thus, who has had strength enough to reserve himself for his first real passion, has a right to believe in the purity of the woman he marries. No matter what semi-philosophers and spurious wiseacres may say, no matter what fools may think, it is false that a man only has a right to the name when he has spent his youth among chance mistresses. There is but one real love — the first and only one!"

"So you never loved any one before me, Lucien?"

"No, never. I swear it, Andrée."

"Then you are the man whom I have always dreamed of and I am not unworthy of you. Ah! I will own it; I suffered for a moment, for some cruel words escaped my mother and made me cry all night. She told me, yesterday, that perhaps you doubted me. Ah! how it made me suffer!"

"Child, dear foolish child! What! could you think that? Ah, I understand the cause of your sadness now. Do you know why I have not yet spoken to your parents, Andrée? It is because you have become to rich for me. I have my poor old mother to care for ——"

"But am I not there to help you? You prefer your vanity to me. You are too proud with your Andrée, and I do not like such pride."

A pause followed. They were now passing between the lakes in the Bois de Boulogne, and they stopped to allow their parents to overtake them. Madame Despretz was not a quick walker, and soon became tired. A dense crowd was now invading the Bois. It was Sunday, and all the faubourgs, all the poorer districts of Paris, had furnished a contingent to the throng. Entire families arrayed in in their best clothes were marching along the leading thoroughfares, bound for the review. Since daybreak, the Boulevards, the Rue de Rivoli and the quays, had been pouring a flood of human beings toward Longchamps. At nine o'clock the first vehicles had started. All the gates of the Bois

were beseiged, and omnibuses crowded with police agents drew up near the cascade. The foot and mounted Gardes de Paris were told off for duty in platoons and squadrons along the avenues, while long columns of artillery and cavalry started from Versailles, St. Germain and Vincennes. Already at daybreak several regiments had bivouaced on the dewy grass; and now while the trim sutlers served out drink, soldiers and civilians were fraternizing together.

The sun had its share in the festive scene as it played brightly over the glistening foliage. There was something forcible in the general gaiety, and the very atmosphere seemed to vibrate with the joyous return of France to life. The number of the troops was gradually increasing. Along the Avenue de Longchamps, along the Avenue des Lacs, over the bridges of St. Cloud and Suresnes, came columns headed by regimental bands. In the direction of Paris the trumpets of the hussars were sounding; from St. Cloud came a clatter and a rumble as the Versailles artillery approached at a fast trot, followed by a brigade of cuirassiers and a regiment of dragoons.

Civilians of all classes, men, women and children, sprang up in every direction; and still and ever the human tide rolled on through thickets, by-paths and avenues. The thousands, who had journeyed by way of the Versailles railway line, now covered the heights of Mont Valérien and Suresnes. Those who had followed the Avenue des Champs Elysées on foot, who had come by steamboat as far as the Point-du-Jour, or who had alighted from the trains of the circular railway at Passy, Neuilly and Auteuil, ranged themselves at the edge of the Longchamps race course; some of them standing on the outskirts of the wood, others climbing the trees to gain a point of vantage, and others again sitting over the cascade with their legs dangling in space. The waterfall seemed to emerge from their feet and pour like a huge shower-bath onto the heads of those below.

At noon the various positions prescribed by the staff-officers were occupied. The infantry was drawn up in three lines parallel to the grand stands; the artillery was ranged in a single line behind the foot soldiers; while a fifth line, perpendicular to the others, was formed by the cavalry stationed along the Boulogne road. Stylish equipages were arriving each minute, and the grand stands were beginning to fill. Tasteful dresses could be seen on the tiers of seats, and bright-colored parasols stood out luminously against the dark garments of the sterner sex. Fans were fluttering amid the bouquets carried by the belles of society and looked like gigantic butterflies hovering over the flowers. Afar off in the shade of the wood numerous less privileged sightseers were enjoying a well-earned rest on the grass.

Andrée and Lucien hurried on, and they were about to enter

the avenue which conducts from the lakes to Longchamps, when all at once they noticed a great commotion among the crowd, and heard loud shouts of "Run them in!"

CHAPTER IX.

The whole throng hastened in the direction of these cries, and during a momentary lull two women could be heard sobbing and moaning. But the fierce jeers of the populace speedily rose on high again and drowned their lamentations. Lucien was not able to hurry Andrée along and spare her the sight of what was taking place, for the crowd was coming toward them. The vehicles drew up short, and their occupants rose from their seats to see what was going on. Inquisitive heads were stretched out on all sides — from landaus, broughams and cabs, from breaks, tilburys and spiders, from huge hotel omnibuses, laden with foreigners, and from vans crammed with families of tradespeople, elbow to elbow and knee to knee. Well-gloved gentlemen then expressed their disgust at what they saw, and young married ladies, with their babies in the arms of buxom nurses, seated on the front cushions, audibly exclaimed:

"It is shameful!"

"It is disgraceful for Paris!"

"All those women ought to be shut up at St. Lazare ——"

"Bah!" rejoined some young swells with Oxford glasses, "there are no real fêtes since the return of the Republic. You only meet beggars and harlots wherever you go."

The crowd pressed forward to jeer at two unfortunates whom four agents of the public morality police force were dragging along. From time to time they refused to advance, and threw themselves on their knees, sobbing and begging for mercy.

"To St. Lazare with them!" cried the mob, and amid its jeers one could hear the bell of an itinerant *coco** vendor, who despite the hubbub was steadily plying his calling at the end of the lake.

As the agents could advance no further, they stretched the two women on the gravel and began tying them together by the waist. The prisoners continued struggling, however, and one of them called out, amid convulsive sobs: "Mamma! mamma!"

"Good heavens!" cried Andrée, turning very pale, "that voice was Margot's." And, with feverish strength, she hurried Lucien through the crowd to the first rank.

It was, indeed, really Margot — Paillardin's whilom favorite, who, since his death, had been living with his valet, Jules. Now

*A popular French beverage prepared from orange peel.—Trans.

Jules, who was a handsome fellow, had declined to work any longer, and he subsisted on the fruit of Margot's infamy. She had become a common unfortunate, and he beat her cruelly whenever she was so unlucky as to return home penniless. She had now been arrested with another girl of her class for accosting people in the wood, and a term of imprisonment at St. Lazare was evidently in store for her. Terrified by this prospect, she still sobbed, plaintively, "Mamma! mamma!"

Thereupon the agent who had "nabbed" her, a tall, thin fellow with a hooked nose and blue glasses, kicked her brutally in the ribs, and cried out: "Shut up, you strumpet!"

Andrée recognized him also by his voice. The police agent who treated Margot so roughly was none other than her old friend the ex-clown, Face-to-Smack, in person. He, himself, had been kicked and beaten of yore by his master, the Hercules, and now he revenged himself on the slaves of Parisian vice. A rolling stone of Bohemia, cast into the sphere of degradation by Nana's dainty hand, he had become acquainted with every shame, and had elbowed every infamy; and if he earned a living now, it was solely thanks to the social evil! He was conscious of his fall, and the woman who had caused his ruin was the object of his hatred—a strange hatred, forsooth, compounded of old love and jealous contempt.

As Andrée recognized him she darted forward, in spite of Lucien's efforts to restrain her. The crowd ceased jeering on beholding her loveliness blooming in the summer sunlight, at sight of her big chaste eyes so deep and limpid. "Why do you strike that woman?" she asked in a tone of girlish authority.

"What does that matter to an honest girl like you?" rejoined the ex-clown. "Do you call that creature a woman, mademoiselle? What would you call your mother then?"

The throng could not understand Andrée's intervention. Why had she undertaken to defend a worthless creature? Still her words had great effect, and public opinion, that ever-turning weathercock, at once veered round to her side. There were murmurs in the serried ranks of spectators, and some exclaimed that it was really too bad to beat a woman, however worthless she might be, in the midst of public rejoicings. After all, what had she done? She had merely plied her calling. Some fishwomen, who were in the crowd raised their fists and shouted: "Leave those girls alone, you set of spies, or else give them something to eat. They can't live on nothing no more than you can, you brutes!"

Then growls and threats resounded. Latent generosity was aroused in the hearts of the mob, now eager to turn its spite on the men who kicked their prisoners. However, the ex-clown had drawn himself up to his full height, and striking an attitude like a mountebank, he shouted in a hoarse voice: "What do

you interfere for, you people? This is our business, not yours. We are paid to arrest strumpets? Well that's better than thieving, I suppose. We must eat like other people, and to eat one must work. Once upon a time I was a clown—yes, I—and I had a master who thrashed me. Now it's my turn to strike. When it's a question of the whip you had far better be on the side of the handle than on that of the lash; and that's why I've become a functionary!"

While this talk was proceeding, one of the police agents had gone off for reinforcements, and he now returned with twelve policemen, two keepers and a cab. The two women were lying on the ground; the agents dragged them by the legs as far as the vehicle, and then, picking them up they threw them inside.* This brutality quite infuriated the crowd, and loud shouts arose of, "Down with the police! To the water with them!" Then there was a formidable push. The disturbance spread and assumed the proportions of a riot. However, the policemen did not lose their heads. They surrounded the cab, while the two agents of the public morality force jumped inside. The girls lay stretched across the vehicle and were howling despairingly. That the mob was bent upon attacking the cab there could be no doubt; but at this moment a detachment of foot Gardes de Paris hurried up, and a regiment of cuirassiers was approaching along the avenue at a fast trot. The troopers were late for the review and hastened onward so as to reach the ground before the arrival of the official cortège.

The crowd drew back hastily, and the flashing mass passed onward like a meteor. When the throng closed up again, the police had profited by the diversion, and the cab had already disappeared down a side avenue.

Lucien and Andrée found themselves separated from their relatives, and it was useless to try and join them in such a throng. The young fellow preferred making an effort to dispel his sweet-heart's distress. But all in vain. It seemed to her as though some catastrophe had fallen upon herself; and in her horrified imagination she could still see Margot, fallen to infamy, bound like a wild beast, dragged and beaten by the police, and thrown into a cab with the companion of her shame. And what could be thought of Face-to-Smack, the clown, once so humble and so kind, and now so brutal, maddened as it were by hunger.

For a brighter picture Andrée had to turn to Nature. The golden sunbeams of noontide were now playing over the foliage of the tall trees, mirrored in the transparent azure of the lake. The warmth of color fairly dazzled one. The tiny ripples sparkled vividly, and the weighty branches seemed decked with

*These incidents are positively founded upon fact.— *Trans.*

a brighter green as they swayed gently in the summer breeze. Over the tall grass the rays were dancing a mid-day round, and, amid the radiant blaze, there still and ever rose the intense far-stretching hum and bustle of Paris on the march. The anger of the crowd, momentarily aroused by the brutality of the police agents, had gradually subsided under the growing weight of the summer heat.

Lucien and Andrée walked on slowly until they reached the height from which the cascade falls. They were fortunate enough to find room to sit down together on the grass; and scarcely had they done so than a cloud of smoke enveloped one of the bastions of Mont Valérien. Then the loud report of cannon stirred the green foliage. The spirited horses of the stylish equipages neighed in the plain below. The army ranged in long, rigid lines on the race-ground seemed to awaken to life. The drums beat, and distant bands burst forth into harmony; while thousands of bayonets glistened amid the rhythmical swinging of masses of armed men. Then an immense clamor arose through the festive space: "Long live the Republic!"

From the Avenue de Longchamps, Marshal MacMahon, holding his white-plumed hat in his hand, was galloping forward on a sleek, black horse, followed by a brilliant staff with waving feathers. Behind came an escort of Spahis, mounted on little, long-tailed horses, and with their bright-red Arab cloaks streaming in the wind. As the hurricane swept by, it seemed to be a vision of human power.

At the same time, a blue, silver-mounted landau, drawn by four piebald horses, came forward at a sharp trot. Inside, between two well-dressed men, there sat a golden-haired woman, arrayed in a tight-fitting robe of white satin, studded with pearls and diamonds. She was reclining indolently on the cushions with her legs crossed, and, her skirt being partially raised, a glimpse was caught of her flesh-tinted stockings and well-turned ankles. Behind the vehicle stood a couple of footmen in blue silk breeches; while two negro postillions bestrode the left-hand horses. The crowd drawn up along the avenue was able to admire this remarkable equipage in its every detail; but from the height whence Andrée looked down on the race-ground, all she detected was Nana's radiant hair, as the queen of vice drove by in the full sunlight, mingled almost with the presidential cortège, which seemed to be her escort.

CHAPTER X.

THE two men who thus exhibited themselves in Nana's carriage were the Marquis d'Albigny and the Prince of Mulhausen. The latter was a Prussian, transplanted from the shores of the

Vistula to the banks of the Seine—a true, stiff, fair-haired Teuton, full of Germanic vanity, intensely proud of his title, fond of being considered a woman-killer, and showing himself in Nana's company for the sake of unhealthy notoriety. He had ruined himself a little bit everywhere with that cold madness peculiar to the people of the North, and he was now approaching the end of his tether. As for Nana, he had never been in love with her, but he liked to pass himself off as one of her protectors.

D'Albigny, on the other hand, was a specimen of the aristocrat who has lost caste; a man with a great deal of bounce and very little honor, more apt to fight for a word than for a wrong; a fencing-hall bully in the morning, a Bourse Jew in the afternoon, and a card-sharper in fashionable gambling dens at night time. He led a fast and luxurious life, lunching at Bignon's, supping at the Café Anglais, and patronizing the swell tailor, Torrès —all with other people's money. Simpletons imagined that it was he who defrayed Nana's luxury, and she herself allowed it to be reported. But the truth was that by squandering for her sake a petty fortune of a million francs in a couple of years, he had fairly launched her, and she was grateful to him for it. Their evil natures were secretly leagued together. He had fought three duels for her; he publicly exhibited himself in her company, and as he passed for an *arbiter elegantarium* on the boulevards, he easily found idiots like Mulhausen, who copied him for the sake of "chic."

Nana and D'Albigny had certainly had tiffs together, but she had always made them up, and she was more than ever desirous of maintaining a good understanding at present, as, having become a millionaire eight times over, she needed the assistance of a skillful money-monger. D'Albigny cost her two hundred thousand francs a year, but he prevented her from losing twice as much by bad investments. While speculating advantageously with Nana's funds, regulating the expenditure of her household and promoting her luxury, he found the means to gratify his own private fancies. For instance, he had given only forty thousand francs for the piebald team which Nana inaugurated on the day of the review, and which caused such a sensation, and yet it was well worth twice as much. However, the dealer he had obtained it from was pressed for money, and had let the animals go for half their value. It is true that Nana was charged the full amount; but after all she lost nothing, and her "barnum," as she cynically called D'Albigny, made two thousand napoleons by the transaction.

D'Albigny and Mulhausen were not Nana's only acolytes. Titled and influential personages of all categories visited her house, and among them there was at least one honest man —Stog, the director of the postal services. Nana had never

been his mistress, although he was in love with her, and although on her side she had no aversion for him. But when Stog was very young he had married a devotee, who had brought him but a small dowry, so that his means were comparatively modest. He had never aspired to Nana's favors, as he knew well enough that his entire year's salary would not suffice to defray her lavish expenditure during a single month. So he called on her but seldom, limiting his visits to her grand receptions without trying to become intimate. The kind of haughty coldness which he affected did not offend Nana, but rather determined her to conquer him. By sundry flashes of his eyes and passionate movements of his lips, she had discovered that he secretly adored her; hence she devoted her efforts to subduing what she called his virtuous resistance. She could not allow any one to raise the standard of revolt against her vicious sovereignty. On the previous evening she had tried to induce Stog to accompany her to the review, desirous that the official world should see him seated in her carriage. But he had contrived to decline the invitation; and now, on reaching the review ground, she espied him in the tribune of honor. The sight annoyed her, and she relieved her feelings by teasing her German prince.

"Do you see, prince," she cried, as the march past began; "here's the military school of St. Cyr. Come, applaud the *revanche*. Come, give a cheer!"

Mulhausen made no reply, but pretended to smile between his tawny whiskers. His tall figure was drawn bolt upright in the true stiff Teutonic style, and he looked every bit of a German, with his hair of a dull yellow, his red ears standing out on either side of his head, and his broad shoulders with their prominent bones.

In the tone of an absolute sovereign accustomed to obedience, Nana continued speaking. "Come, applaud, Mulhausen, applaud the *revanche!*" she cried; "I order you to do so."

Thereupon Mulhausen applauded with the tips of his gloved hands, and a flush suffused his face, as if he were conscious that the harlot beside him had cuffed his dear Fatherland in his own princely person.

Meanwhile the battalion of St. Cyr was advancing with magnificent *ensemble*. The gun barrels gleamed in the sunlight on the robust shoulders of the young fellows, all of whose knees bent with the same nervous flexion, and all of whose left arms swung with the same regular cadence. It was truly the hope of the army, the coming *revanche* that marched along! It was the strength of new France—the young generation, steeled by the sufferings of former ones, and proudly determined that their country should be respected. Afar off in the plain the three lines of infantry had faced about. The regiments successively

set off on the march in deep columns of thirty-two files, bands ahead and banners waving. A glittering mass of steel covered the verdant race-ground, and from every point of the horizon, from the heights of Suresnes and the slopes of Mont Valérine, from the depths of the avenues and the outskirts of the wood, there arose the shouts of the multitude: "Long live the Republic!" "Long live the army!" "Long live France!"

The firemen were now marching past, and the Garde Republicaine and Parisian Gendarmerie followed. Then came the whole of the regular infantry — thirty thousand men, massed in divisions, wheeling round without a break, and stepping out jauntily despite the morning's march, their white gaiters and blood-red trousers coming and going in the same regular stride. The grand stands applauded each division as it marched past in turn with genuine French spirit. The beardless faces of the little foot-soldiers beamed with Gallic good-humor and Celtic healthfulness. Between the platoons marched the officers, with their heads erect and their faces serious as they saluted the chief of the State with their swords. When the whole of the infantry had marched past, a broad space was left for the artillery, and eighteen batteries, forming a single column, with six guns to each front, started off at a fast trot. At the end of the plain the heavy carriages wheeled round, and as the teams of six horses entered the straight line, they broke into a gallop. Two brigades executed the movement faultlessly, without a single horse taking a wrong step. The red plumes of the gunners waved in the gray atmosphere through which a cloud of dust was rising, and the black guns jolted on their steel axles as the compact mass swept by.

Then the cheers increased. Middle and lower classes alike united in the common thought inspired by the superb cry of "Long live France!" "Long live France!" It meant everything in three words. Despite her faults, despite passing weakness, despite misfortunes, was not France the generous sister of humiliated nations — the living hope of all who were proscribed? Long live France! 'twas the cry of the future — the cry of freedom and universal fraternity.

"Come, Mulhausen," said Nana, "you are as grave as a senator on a national fête day. This isn't allowable. Cry 'Long live France!' or I shall never permit you to show yourself in public with me again."

He began by refusing; whereupon she stood up, and feigning patriotism to annoy him, waved her fan to the cuirassiers of Reichsoffen who were galloping past in squadrons. D'Albigny laughed to himself; and Nana, with feminine obstinacy, and convinced that she would ultimately carry the point, turned again to Mulhausen, and, in a tone of galling irony, exclaimed: "Come, confess it, prince. You are afraid of Bismarck. You

Germans are all like so many school-boys with their master. Otherwise you surely wouldn't refuse a cheer to Nana's country."

"Long live France!" vociferated Mulhausen, with concentrated fury.

"Bravo, prince! I'm pleased with you," said Nana. "Come home with us; we shall have a delightful drive."

Mulhausen assisted her into the landau, and the postillions took the Avenue des Lacs. It was now five o'clock, and the sun was sinking behind a slate-gray cloud, traversed by a band of gold. A yellowish tinge was blended with the pale blue below, and here and there through the semi-transparent clouds sun rays glittered like live coals, gilding the tree-tops in their oblique course. Near the silvery lakes the clumps of pine trees stood out against the dusky avenues leading down to Boulogne, where a tapering church steeple rose up in advance of the heights of Garches. At the end of the avenue of the Bois de Boulogne the Arc de Triomphe was visible, and Nana's landau, whirling along at the fast trot of the piebald team, reached it in time to overtake a regiment of cavalry returning from the review. The equipage was just passing the head of the column, when the trumpets sounded a march. The four piebalds reared together and so swiftly, that the two negro postillions were dismounted and fell under the wheels of the carriage. Then the horses, freed from all restraint, bolted at full speed down the Avenue des Champs Elysées.

On went the landau at a full gallop, sweeping like an avalanche into the midst of the carriages, horsemen and pedestrians that crowded the whole breadth of the avenue. Terrible disorder ensued; other horses were frightened in turn and bolted also. At the very outset of the accident the footmen had sprung to the ground, leaving the landau to its fate. But D'Albigny now bravely threw himself onto the hind-quarters of one of the horses and caught hold of a rein. But it was too late to slacken the speed; besides, the reins broke, and then the piebalds dashed madly onward with increasing swiftness.

Mulhausen was instinctively clutching hold of the cushions, and Nana, who had remained very calm, turned toward him.

"I fancy, my dear prince," said she, "that we are going to break our necks."

"Of course," rejoined the German, turning perceptibly paler between his tawny whiskers; "we are done for."

He looked so terrified that Nana could not help laughing despite all the gravity of the situation. They were passing the Palais de l'Industrie when the four horses suddenly swerved and darted onto the footway covered with chairs, dragging the landau into the side alley. Two policemen then sprang at the heads of the leaders, but one of the brave fellows was knocked

down and trampled under foot ere he could clutch at the strip of rein dangling from the bridle, and the other fell sideways right under the carriage. Then there was a general stampede, and terrified women let go of their husbands' arms and fled blindly along the alley, pursued by the furious charge of these maddened animals.

CHAPTER XI.

At the moment when the accident occurred Andrée, who felt very tired, having walked all the way from the cascade in the Bois de Boulogne, had just taken a chair with Lucien on the sidewalk of the Champs Elysées. The onslaught of the maddened team was so sudden that they were unable to draw aside and avoid it. M. Despretz instinctively threw himself between his betrothed and the horses, and clung despairingly to one of the broken reins. But another one, coiling around Andrée like a lasso, threw her down and dragged her along behind her lover. Fortunately, at this moment, one of the leaders came in contact with a tree and fell to the ground, the other horses rolling over him in a confused heap. Lucien at once darted to the succor of Andrée, who had now fainted away, while, at the same time, Nana sprang from the carriage with the agility of a clown, and the marquis emerged from the midst of the horses unhurt. He had as usual contrived to fall upon his feet.

A policeman hurried to the spot to draw up a report of the accident, and the people who had been knocked down and hurt were carried to the Théâtre des Folies Marigny, close by, which was transformed for the occasion into an ambulance. Lucien led Andrée to a bench in the open air and made her sit down. Her fainting fit had soon passed off, but she was still extremely pale. Nana was looking at her with strange persistency, and suddenly drew near, exclaiming in a soft, caressing voice: "You are hurt, my child; what can I do for you?"

"Nothing, thank you, madame," replied Andrée; "I was more frightened than hurt."

"It seems to me that this is not the first time we have met," resumed Nana. "I fancy I have noticed you somewhere before; and it is not surprising, for you are extremely pretty. If this gentleman is your lover I must offer him my sincere congratulations," she added with a questioning glance at Julien.

"And I also," observed Mulhausen. "I very well recollect having seen this young lady one evening at the Bouffes."

Andrée blushed.

"Allow me to offer you my earrings in exchange for yours," resumed Nana. "We shall thus each have a memento of our emotion. Are you willing, little one?"

"I cannot accept," replied Andrée. "My earrings are a present from this gentleman, my intended husband."

"Well, allow me to call and inquire after you," insisted Nana.

"Willingly, madame; here is my card."

"Ah! you make artificial flowers," exclaimed Nana. "It is very courageous on your part to work for your living, pretty as you are. Until to-morrow then—I will go and see your flowers and yourself—D'Albigny, call a cab. Are you coming, Mulhausen?"

"Thanks, madame, I shall return on foot," said the German.

Nana gave a loud laugh, and then darted into the cab which the marquis had just stopped. "Why are you going to see that girl?" grumbled D'Albigny, "she's virtuous. There's nothing to be done with her."

"Who knows, my dear fellow," rejoined Nana. But no more was heard, for at that moment the cab set off.

Leaning on Lucien's arm, Andrée now tried to walk, but she was soon obliged to stop, for her right foot was badly hurt and swollen, and she felt sharp, shooting pains in her head. Lucien accordingly hailed a cab, and gave Andrée's address at Batignolles. They found on their arrival that the Naviels and Madame Despretz had returned for an hour or more already. Lucien tried to attenuate the gravity of the peril his sweetheart had incurred, while Andrée on her side pretended to be gay, and even sat down to dinner with the others. But the pain in her foot was steadily increasing. She turned very pale and suddenly her head bent forward on her bosom. Lucien, who sat beside her, had only just time to stretch out his arm to prevent her from falling to the ground. As he did so, Andrée faintly whispered to him: "I am suffering too much, help me to walk to my room."

Taking her in his arms as if she had been a child, he immediately carried her to her chamber, followed by Madame Naviel, who remained alone with her daughter to help her to undress. Andrée's right foot was then found to be very swollen, and she had a bad bruise at the back of her head. She was scarcely in bed than delirium seized hold of her, and her father hurried off for a doctor. Lucien asked as a favor to be allowed to remain and assist Madame Naviel in watching and nursing the suffering girl.

"If I ask this favor, Madame Naviel," said he, "it is because I spoke very seriously to Mademoiselle Andrée while we were together to-day. I was waiting for my position to become more worthy of her before asking you for her hand, but perhaps I may be useful to her such as I am. So I beg of you to consider me henceforth as her betrothed and as your son. To-morrow my mother shall make a formal application to Monsieur Naviel and yourself."

"From this moment," rejoined Madame Naviel, "we will consider you as one of the family. We know very well, Naviel and I, that Andrée loves you, and I can assure you that my husband won't disapprove of the match. So you may stop here as you wish it—and you can help me to nurse her. She will be pleased to see you."

They then returned into Andrée's room, where Madame Despretz was sitting at the bedside. "The poor girl is very delirious," said Lucien's mother, in a low voice.

Extremely pale, except that she had a red spot on either cheek, Andrée was leaning back on her pillows, with her dilated eyes staring into space as if she beheld some threatening vision. Suddenly a cry of agony escaped her. "Nana!" she cried, "leave me, leave me! I am not like you — why do you come here? Leave me, madame! Ah! I knew very well that you would bring me misfortune."

Shortly afterward the doctor arrived, examined the patient, and wrote his prescription. As he left the room with Naviel, he remarked: "The swelling of the foot is nothing; but the delirium worries me. I fear some commotion in the brain. Your daughter must be of a nervous, impressionable disposition?"

"Yes," replied Pierre Naviel, "the child isn't strong, and she easily loses her head."

"Ah! these youthful imaginations!" said the doctor. "You are a father, mind; be prudent, you have to deal with a very ardent nature." And thereupon he went off.

"Prudent! prudent!" grumbled the workman. "He talks fine enough, that doctor, but it isn't so easy to prevent a girl's imagination from wandering. However, she's fortunately in love with an honest fellow. Poor girl, I think I've done my duty by her. I've tried my best to give her good principles, and her mother has given her an honorable calling. The future will do the rest. Meanwhile, I'll keep my eyes open."

He then entered his daughter's room, and espied Lucien Despretz leaning on the mantelshelf and looking anxiously at Andrée. A tear was rolling down the young fellow's cheek; and at sight of it Naviel stepped forward and with affectionate roughness, exclaimed: "What, you are crying, a man like you? But the little one isn't in danger." And then with a broad, candid smile, he added: "Stay with us to watch over her if you don't feel easy——"

"He has the right to do so," observed Madame Naviel, "for he spoke to me about her this very evening. It's understood between us. I said 'yes' for both of us, dear, knowing your views on the matter. As soon as she is well again we will see about marrying them. *She* won't say no."

"All right, all right, wife," rejoined Naviel, "it's your business. I leave it all to you." And thereupon he went off

into the kitchen to light his pipe and smoke. Madame Naviel speedily followed him to wash up the dinner things.

Madame Despretz and Lucien thus remained watching over Andrée, but the old lady, who was very tired, soon fell asleep in her arm-chair, so that Lucien alone remained awake beside his sweetheart, attentively observing her every movement. It was already late, and the last suburban trains were returning to Paris. One could hear them rolling along in the cutting at the end of the square, and from time to time the ponderous, red-eyed engines shrieked aloud like wild beasts amid the stillness of the night.

At one moment Andrée sat up in bed and looked at Lucien, whom she evidently recognized, despite her fever, for she stretched out her arms. But, passing an arm round her, he gently compelled her to lie down again, with her head on the white pillow, and she then had an hour's quiet sleep. Madame Naviel and her husband came in several times to see how their daughter was getting on. At eleven o'clock Pierre himself went to bed, for he was obliged to rise at five on the following morning in order to get to his work. Madame Naviel then wished to watch over Andrée, but Lucien remarked to her that the poor girl was asleep, that she would, no doubt, need several days' rest, and that she — the mother — ought rather to husband her strength, as the work-room would have to be attended to. He therefore suggested that Madame Naviel should lie down for a few hours whilst he watched over Andrée with his mother. Madame Naviel finally yielded to his request, and then, as Madame Despretz dozed off again in her arm-chair, Lucien sat watching his betrothed amid the mysterious silence of this virginal room, which he had never before entered save in thought.

At midnight the sufferer had a fresh crisis, and sat up in bed again with her golden hair falling around her shoulders and a fixed stare in her eyes. With her tiny hands stretched out toward the man she loved, she called to him in a mysterious tone: "Lucien, my Lucien, it is true, is it not, we are married? At last! How impatiently I awaited it, to tell you how much I love you, to tell it to you with my lips close to yours — come near your Andrée, friend, why do you remain so far away? Do I frighten you? Am I so ugly, then? Oh! you naughty fellow, don't leave me again. Ah! the beautiful white roses. I scattered their petals in my chest of drawers, and all my clothes are perfumed with memory of *you*." As she spoke she gazed upon Lucien fixedly, and her deep eyes became radiant with sudden passion. Under the influence of her ardent delirium, which little by little was gaining her lover himself, her chaste nature underwent a complete change. At one moment she twined her bare arms around Lucien's neck and pressed him to

her heart. He could already feel her soft, moist skin, when suddenly leaning toward him, and covering him with her warm hair, she kissed him on the lips — with so long a kiss that he sank down, pale with the emotion imparted by this first embrace of love.

But his rapture was of short duration. He roused himself from this fit of weakness, feeling even ashamed that he had answered the appeal of Andrée's unconscious delirium with a voluntary kiss. It indeed seemed to him, so great was his delicacy of feeling, as if he had momentarily ceased to respect the confiding purity of his loved one, who called upon him in a momentary derangement of the mind. So he gently tore himself away from her embrace, and with his breath close to her tiny, roseate ear, half covered by curling locks, he murmured: "Sleep, Andrée, I am there; I love you with all my soul. I will protect you, darling, even against myself — fear nothing."

As if she had instinctively understood what peaceful confidence he asked of her, she again laid her fair head upon the pillow, and closed her eyes fringed with long, curving lashes, which cast a soft shadow over her pale cheeks. Her hands fell among the creases of the sheet with her fingers bent in the listless inertion of slumber.

At this moment Madame Naviel entered the room. She had heard Andrée's voice, and feared that she might be worse; but seeing that the young girl was already asleep again, she felt reassured, and returned to stretch herself, still dressed, on the sofa in the parlor.

CHAPTER XII.

While Stog, the Director of the Postal Services, was at his club on the evening after the review, he heard of the accident which had befallen Nana's equipage. Hurrying to the cloak-room for his hat and overcoat, he at once went down the stairs. He hailed the first empty cab he espied in the street, and ten minutes later he reached Nana's house.

She received him in her boudoir, which was a present from the Prince of Mulhausen. At one end there was a divan having a rosewood framework encrusted with figures painted on enamel. A grand piano, the keyboard of which rested upon the out-spread wings of two angels in repoussé silver, stood in one corner; and close by there was a round table, in the style of the first empire; four legs of gilt beechwood supporting a slab of *lapis lazuli*. Above the chimney-piece, which was of cut-glass encrusted with a silver N. and a topaz coronet, there hung a mirror with a frame of rock crystal depicting twining vine-

leaves and drooping bunches of amethysts. Two crystal candelabra of similar style simulated vine-stocks laden with fruit; and a chandelier in keeping with the whole was suspended from the center of the ceiling. A Candahar carpet covered the floor, and in front of the fender lay the skin of a tiger, whose eyes were formed of two rubies which had once belonged to the unfortunate rajah, ruined by Nana in a single week and now returned to Benares.

A portly gorilla, trained to act as a servant, crouched at one end of the boudoir. He was called Yorick, and it was he who ushered Stog into the room.

Nana was alone. She went forward to meet her visitor, and held out her hand, exclaiming: "So here you are at last, my dear Stog! So far you had not condescended to come here for *me*."

"I heard of your accident this evening, and I thought it my duty to come and inquire after you."

"What a singular lover you are, my dear Stog! So you have only come here out of politeness? I doubt it. You are far from feeling the frigidity you affect. What is the use of this comedy? I know you by heart. Come, be frank, Stog, virtuous Stog; confess that you are madly in love with Nana. You see how kind I am. I do all the talking for you. I even make your declaration. But I can't proceed any further unless you help me. You are like a tenor who loses his voice directly he finds himself in the presence of the soprano he is to sing with."

"Don't joke, Nana. The truth is, you have made a correct guess. I would give my life for you if it were possible, but I cannot do so, for it does not belong to me."

"To whom does it belong, then? To your family, no doubt. Very good. Still you were not intended for a recluse. A man like you, with a burning heart and boiling blood, cannot surely be contented with commonplace matrimonial bliss—a kind of happiness regulated by clockwork. You were never meant for such a life as that, Stog. You are virtuous, in spite of yourself. You gnaw at the conjugal chain, biting its links to stifle your cries of desire, my poor Stog. Well, take my advice, and break them just for once."

"Ah! it would be my dream, Nana. But once! It would suffice for all the recollections of a lifetime. But why tempt me with the impossible? I'm only a poor married man, I cannot be your lover."

"Listen to me, Stog. You will understand that if *noblesse oblige*, as they say, love obliges also. You say you are in love with me; well, I shall ask you for scarcely anything. A personal memento, say; a little gold locket with your portrait inside and our initials intertwining on the cover. Is it agreed?"

"Let it be so, Nana. You shall have it. But you will keep

it, promise me. You will hide it from every one, even from D'Albigny, and especially from him? I would not for worlds let my wife know of our connection. She would start a lawsuit, and the effect would be disastrous for my children and their honor."

"Is honor so rare among you people of the middle classes that you value it so highly, my dear fellow! Honor! Why, we have enough and to spare, we women."

"But you will be kind, Nana; you won't abuse my love for you, or your power over me."

"You are cast in rather an ancient mold to have anything to do with Nana's set, my poor fellow. It would perhaps be better for you to return to your fireside, and never leave it again. You see, it is I who give you good advice."

"But, Nana, I love you so."

"Well, I'll listen to you when you bring me the locket, and then, Stog, you shall see what a woman Nana is." While speaking she rose, and as he stood there, a prey to mad desire, she passed her arms around his neck, murmuring soft and promising words. He was fairly intoxicated by the glow of passion in her eyes, the disturbing warmth of her flesh, and the eloquence of her kiss-inviting smile.

"I will come," he sighed; "but if you reveal it, I shall kill you, and myself afterward."

"Come, come, my dear fellow, do people kill themselves nowadays? It's foolish, odious and altogether out of fashion. And by what right would you kill me? If any one here ever raised his hand against me, Yorick would strangle him. You won't kill any one, my own Stog; you will want to live, on the contrary, and live with me. I will love you with all my being, do you hear? For you please me, otherwise I shouldn't accept such a bargain, and much less propose it. You are not a flattering lover for a woman, Stog. You are a bit of a clodhopper, functionary as you may be. And I, I need so much money. Gold ceaselessly slips between my fingers — you have no idea how fast it goes. This house here is a furnace in which millions melt. But it can't be otherwise; I sacrifice everything to pleasure. And pleasure can't be had when one is in needy circumstances, you know. One needs a deal of money to love properly. Love and wealth were made to sleep together, they exist one by the other. And then where can money be found? Among honest toilers? Oh! indeed no. Show me a man of genius, Stog, who sells his intelligence as I sell my beauty. Do you know, my dear fellow, when a man is honest nowadays, he ought to stop at home with his wife, have a number of children, and die poor."

As Nana ceased speaking, she sank down onto the divan and stretched herself out in a statuesque position. She raised her

arms and leaned her head on her joined hands, while the rosy glow of the tapers fell upon her bosom, The curly locks at the back of her neck sparkled like gold, and under her long dressing-gown one could divine the sculptural purity of her form. From amid the lace, a tiny bare foot peered forth, balancing on the tips of its toes a red-leather slipper of Oriental shape, richly embroidered with pearls.

"Haven't you a daughter, Stog?" Nana inquired after a pause.

"Why do you ask me that, Nana?"

"Tell me, have you a daughter or not?"

"Yes, but what of it?"

Nana hesitated as if she were aware that the Director-General's feelings must be different to her own, as if she dared not venture too far into the mysterious region of middle-class honorability. Stog, meanwhile, was looking at her inquisitively.

"I might help you to marry her, my dear fellow," said Nana, at last. "It would perhaps be difficult for you to manage it."

Stog awoke as though from a trance. His past life was without a stain, and it seemed to his loyal conscience as if he had just made a bad dream. He drew himself up to his full height, and retorted: "*You* find a husband for my daughter? And what husband, pray? One of your lovers no doubt — some fellow like D'Albigny ——"

But he did not finish, for at this moment the marquis entered the room. "What is this, Mr. Functionary?" he cried in a tone of cutting irony. If the Marquis D'Albigny did you the honor to accept the hand of a nobody's daughter, you would owe him your grateful thanks — yes, your thanks, sir; but don't alarm yourself, the Marquis D'Albigny doesn't care for misery, and he hates married life."

"I see that walls have ears in this house," coldly rejoined Stog.

"Well, as men lack them, walls must supply the deficiency."

"Men may lack them," replied Stog, taking a step toward D'Albigny, "but marquises seem to have very long ones — especially those who act as madame's spies."

"Enough, enough, gentlemen," interrupted Nana, as she sprang between Stog and D'Albigny. "I don't wish to have any blood spilt in my house."

"Fear nothing," said Stog, "I am not going to fight with this — person."

"You don't fight with any one," rejoined D'Albigny.

"Because I never quarrel with honest folks."

"A coward's motto, upon my word."

"Remain but one week without thieving, and let me have proof of it ——"

"But who would give you such proof, Stog?" asked Nana.

"You yourself, madame. I will content myself with your word. You see that I am not exacting. If you do not send me the certificate of honesty I ask for within a week, I shall judge that you do not care to risk your word; but if you send it I will at once come here with two seconds. I know that you intend giving a fête next Sunday, and I will profit of the occasion to chastise your bully publicly!"

"Make yourself easy!" sneered the marquis. "You talked about killing yourself a little while ago; you won't lose anything by waiting; I shall spare you the trouble."

Without replying Stog bowed coldly to Nana, set his hat on his head and disappeared behind the silken door-hanging.

"You did wrong to intervene, Marquis," said Nana, peevishly, as soon as she was alone with D'Albigny.

"And why, pray?"

"Well, although I blundered by talking about marrying his daughter, I should probably have wrung from him what I asked for."

"But what did you want with that locket?"

"Why, I wanted it as a weapon against him, can't you understand? A director-general of the postoffice might be useful to me."

"It would have been a clumsy piece of blackmailing, and might have compromised us. I am really delighted that I intervened. I have now a serious pretext for getting rid of a rival who is both troublesome and played out."

"You are dressed I see; don't you intend to remain at home this evening?"

"I am going to the club."

"Are you obliged to go?"

"Quite so. Otherwise I should stop with you, Nana, but its incredible how fast my pockets empty. By-the-way, do you know that three of the piebalds have been taken to the knacker's?"

"It's disastrous!"

"Well, I'm going to court Goddess Fortune. Until to-morrow." And humming an air from the gambling scene in *Robert le Diable*, the marquis left the room.

CHAPTER XIII.

ANDRÉE slept until daybreak. When she awoke, Madame Naviel had been up for some time already. She had just lighted a fire in the kitchen and made some coffee, a cup of which she brought to Lucien. Andrée opened her eyes as her mother entered the room, and seeing the young fellow seated near her bed she blushed. "You were there, then?" she asked.

"Yes," said her mother, "he was there and acted as your nurse; he wouldn't even let me help him."

Worthy Madame Despretz in her turn now woke up in her arm-chair, feeling considerably stiffened by such a bad night's rest. "You would have done better to have gone home to bed, mother," said her son, affectionately.

"I remained so that Madame Naviel might have a few hours' rest, as she is compelled to work this morning."

"Well, if you had done the same, mother, you would be quite fresh by now instead of tired out."

"My dear boy, I wished to watch with you, out of respect for propriety."

"Thank you, madame," replied Andrée; but I know your son well enough to be sure that I had nothing to fear from him."

"A virtuous, candid, young girl like yourself would naturally think so; but it is always well not to expose oneself, even with the most discreet of lovers."

Madame Despretz was extremely fond of her son, and had a high opinion of his good conduct; but in spite of the regular life he led, she could not help feeling somewhat sceptical. She did not trust men in love affairs, for there had been some painful events in her own youthful life, the recollection of which was ineffaceable. Still, she must have been very beautiful in her younger days, and it seemed probable that she had been adored. Perhaps she had suffered through an excess of sensibility; at all events, at sight of her sad smile, one could divine that some devouring secret dwelt in her mind. She was prematurely aged, but her big, black eyes were, at times, still illuminated by a feverish fire. That was the only sign of life in her pale, ivory-tinted face.

She now rose up to assist Madame Naviel in putting things straight. Naviel himself had been gone an hour already. He had got up several times during the night to listen at Andrée's door, but as he merely heard the regular breathing of her slumber, he had not ventured inside for fear of disturbing her.

The dawn now glided into the room through the muslin curtains, and the night-light began to flicker on the chest of drawers. Convolvuli climbed around the window outside, the deep-blue flowers bending beneath the weight of the dewdrops which the rising sun was drinking. The blue sky would have been speckless save for one tiny cloud which the breeze was wafting along between two blackened factory chimneys. One could hear the early morning trains as they rolled onward through the neighboring tunnel, whence every now and then there came a sound as of subterranean thunder, followed by the loud, prolonged whistle of the engines. And meanwhile the milk carts jolted heavily over the paving stones of the Rue

Legendre, on the granite curbstones of which stood the street-sweepers working automatically.

Then suddenly a blackbird began to whistle among the horse-chestnut trees in the square. "Do you hear?" asked Andrée; "that has been my alarum for the last fortnight."

"What! are you courageous enough to get up at this time of day?" asked Lucien.

"Certainly I am. I like to jump out of bed at daybreak. One feels fresh and disposed for work; and one's eyes are not heavy as by lamp-light in the evening."

"But shall we get up as early as that when we are married?"

"No doubt. At least I speak for myself. You can stop in bed if you like, you lazy fellow, and Andrée will bring you your coffee."

"Excuse me, Andrée, but doesn't it tire you to talk? You nad a great deal of fever during the night, and if you knew ——"

"What, pray?"

"Nothing."

"But I want to know."

"Well, you told me a lot of pretty things which you wouldn't repeat now."

"What pretty things?"

"That you loved me a great deal."

"That is true. But what else did I say?"

"Well, afterward you thought we were married and you passed your arms round my neck to kiss me."

"Really? Oh, no, I can't have done that."

"What does it matter? You had the fever and did not think of what you were saying. To calm you I had to rock you like a child with your head on my shoulder."

"What! I slept with my head on your shoulder?"

"Only for a moment, for I settled you comfortably on your pillow again, and yet I was so happy to feel you near me."

At this moment Madame Despretz entered the room, interrupting the conversation of the two young lovers, who were now feeling the first glow of passion. Andrée looked very charming with her head nestling on the white pillow, with her bright eyes, in which there was still a gleam of fever, her flushing cheeks and her happy smile, tender with new-born love. The white radiance of morning played over the outline of her youthful form, which was just discernible under the creases of the white linen sheet falling over the new mahogany bedstead. She remained very calm and even talked of getting up. But Lucien scolded her gently as if she had been a spoilt child, and made her promise to remain in bed until he returned. At eight o'clock he left for his establishment in the Rue Montmartre,

where he would have to remain until the evening; and shortly afterward Madame Despretz went home.

Andrée remained alone with her mother, for when the work-girls arrived they merely passed through the room to inquire after her health, having heard of the accident from the porter of the house. The morning passed by without any other incident. Madame Naviel set her work-table beside the bedstead, and began mounting artificial roses, whilst Andrée watched her with a dreamy look in her eyes, half closed by fatigue. Now and then, however, Madame Naviel asked some question respecting the events of the previous day, and they exchanged remarks concerning the cruel fate of Margot, and the insolent luxury of Nana, who had unintentionally placed Andrée's life in peril.

"We will receive her politely if she comes here," said Madame Naviel. "Women like her at least provide work for honest folks." And then she again resumed mounting her roses with infinite tastefulness, care and delicacy of touch.

Andrée began to think of Lucien Despretz, and felt all the pride of a woman who is beloved, on reflecting that he was capable of risking his life for her, as was shown by the bravery with which he had flung himself at the head of Nana's horses. Then she remembered his vigil of the previous night, and the blood flowed to her heart and her cheeks as she reflected that she had, perhaps, said things she ought not to have uttered, and which he would not dare to repeat to her.

She passed the morning in this dreamy state, merely rousing herself at long intervals to answer her mother's questions. But at three o'clock in the afternoon there came a ring at the door bell, and one of the work-girls having gone to see who it was, returned to say that a lady had come to inquire after Mademoiselle Andrée, and wished to speak with her. Her carriage was waiting down-stairs.

"Let her come in," replied Madame Naviel.

A rustle was heard over the floor of the parlor, and then Nana, wearing a simple black-silk dress, entered Andrée's room, hastened to the bedside, and took the young girl's fingers between her gloved hands. "I have been thinking a great deal about you," she said. "This accident has altogether upset me. However, you were miraculously preserved, and I feel very happy that no serious harm came to you." Then turning to Madame Naviel, she added: "I should like to have two clumps of variegated roses for a couple of Japanese flower stands which one of my friends has given me. On Sunday next I shall give a concert and a ball, and I should like to have the flowers on the day before. Can you promise them me for then?"

"We will set to work with them this evening, madame."

"I hope that your daughter won't refuse to come and arrange

them in the flower stands; and if she consents, you must allow me, madame, to keep her to lunch alone with me."

"I will go, madame," said Andrée. "I shall certainly be able to walk before the week is over.

"But you must not act imprudently on my account. If you will write a line when the roses are ready, or send one of your girls with a message, my brougham shall come and fetch you here. Do you suffer very much?"

"The pain is not quite so great, and I think that the swelling is subsiding," replied Andrée.

"Poor child! you must have been kicked by one of those maddened horses. I certainly risked breaking my own neck, but, see how lucky I am, I escaped without a scratch; while you — but show me your foot."

Andrée drew aside the sheet and allowed her foot and ankle to hang out of the bed.

"Have you seen a doctor?" asked Nana.

"Yes, madame."

"Your ankle is very swollen, and some muscle must have been damaged. You mustn't tire yourself. Does it hurt you when I touch you?"

"Yes, a little, madame."

"What a pretty ankle you have! And what soft skin! You are really adorably pretty! And I shouldn't care for my lovers to see you — Ah! that young man I saw with you yesterday is a fortunate fellow! Besides, he is good-looking and far braver than my Prince of Mulhausen. I regret for your sake that he isn't better off. He is a clerk, no doubt?"

"Yes, madame."

"Ah! *I* had a clerk for my lover once. It astonishes you, perhaps, for I don't look like a woman who associates with clerks. And yet, my dear, that fellow was the only one I ever really loved for two months at a stretch."

As Nana spoke she began to examine a box of yellow roses. She fastened one of the flowers in her hair and approached the looking-glass to judge of the effect. Then returning to the bedside she placed the same rose on Andrée's head. "It is astonishing," she resumed, "how much we are alike each other. Your hair is just the same shade as mine, and our eyes have the same sparkle. Mine are of a greenish blue and so are yours, with little yellow marks in the pupils. If you were not this lady's daughter I should claim you as mine."

"You are too young to have a daughter of my age," remarked Andrée in a tone of sincerity.

"Of course, you are right, my dear, it wouldn't be to my advantage. You would rather be my sister. But, at all events, you are charming, and if I were a man I should do all kinds of

mad things for your sake. Now, good-by for the present, pretty one; make haste and get well again. Good-day, madame."

Thereupon she left the room without the least attempt at effect like an "irregular" accustomed to play "the great lady." With lowered eyes she observed the creases of her dress as her skirt swept over the parlor carpet, rustling like dead leaves.

CHAPTER XIV.

NANA'S house was full of workpeople, who were completing the preparations for her approaching fête. Four large reception-rooms, looking on the one hand into the park, and on the other into the vast conservatory, and connected by folding-doors, were being decorated for the entertainment. D'Albigny's library was transformed into a smoking-room, the billiard-hall into a card-room; while a stand for the orchestra was set up in the conservatory. The ball was fixed to take place on Sunday, and on the Saturday morning Nana sent her brougham to fetch Mademoiselle Naviel from Batignolles. The roses she had ordered had just been finished, and Andrée was dressing when her mother came to tell her that Nana's brougham was waiting in the street.

Andrée had become somewhat thinner since her accident on the day of the review, and she walked slightly lame. Although the swelling of her ankle was now subsiding, and she was able to get up and help her mother with the flowers, she was still careful to keep her right leg in a horizontal position as often as possible. On the morrow of the night which Lucien had spent at Andrée's bedside, Madame Despretz had formally asked for the young girl's hand. The Naviels had immediately given their consent, and the marriage was decided upon in principle, although the day was not yet fixed. Every morning before going to his work, Lucien came to see Andrée, and he returned to Batignolles as soon as the day's toil was over. Every other evening, moreover, he dined at his future father-in-law's, seated beside his betrothed, to whom he was most attentive.

He came as usual on the morning when Andrée was to take the flowers to Nana, and waited until she was ready, so that he might kiss her before hastening off to the Rue Montmartre. Mademoiselle Naviel looked charming. She had put on a lilac dress like the one she had worn that evening at the Bouffes; and this reminded them both of the bouquet of white roses which Lucien had offered to "virtuous beauty." Andrée had not forgotten the advice that her future lover had tendered with his floral offering. As he now took his leave, he asked her

rather anxiously, "Shall you remain long at that woman's, dear?"

"As short a time as possible," Andrée replied. "But she is a good customer, you know; and if, as she suggested, I am obliged to arrange the flowers myself, I shall be kept there all the morning. It is even possible that she may keep me to lunch. She spoke of doing so on the day she called here."

Lucien went off somewhat saddened, but Andrée was very gay. And this was only natural, for she had many reasons to feel happy. She was almost cured now; she would soon share the life of the only man she had ever loved; her little business was prosperously increasing, and she was able to surround her parents with comforts. So the future beamed ahead in bright serenity.

The roses which Nana had ordered were marvels of their kind, and Madame Naviel and Andrée had bestowed all their talent upon them, for the fêtes that this woman gave were events in Paris, and attention was invariably attracted to the artists who participated, from far or near, in adorning the fairy-like palace of the queen of vice. Moreover, virtuous as Andrée was, she felt no little feminine curiosity respecting the home of this woman who devoured kingdoms, and she was eager to visit it. She placed her flowers in the satin-lined brougham, and then, as soon as she had ensconced herself amid the radiant bloom which her fingers had called forth, the coachman touched up his horses and off they went.

Nana was taking her bath when Andrée arrived; and Virginie, the maid, ushered the young girl into the bath-room — all black marble and silver mountings — where Nana's rosy carnation and tawny hair stood out in marvelous relief. "Virginie, dry me quick and dress me," cried the courtesan, springing naked and sweet-scented out of the perfumed water of the silver bath. And she unblushingly displayed the opulent splendor of her sculptural beauty, while Virginie wiped her tiny feet and put on her slippers. "Make haste, girl," said Nana, "I want to see my roses. Excuse me, mademoiselle. In five minutes I shall be ready."

As soon as she was enveloped in a long dressing-gown of Chinese silk, in which she draped herself with the natural grace of a Greek Venus, she led Andrée out of the room and wished to see the roses at once. A footman had ranged them in the hall at the foot of the stairs. Nana found them charming. "I say, Mademoiselle Andrée," she remarked, "you must really teach me how to mount roses. It will amuse me to know how to do something. It isn't my fault if I was never taught anything. At present I know how to sing, and as I have a good voice I could go on the stage if I chose; but, pooh! I'm not in need of money. Men are so stupid, they are only fit to be plucked, and

I pluck them properly! Well, what would you have! A woman like I am — a woman sprung from the people, and who has become a social power, thanks to her mere beauty — proves useful to poor folks. The money we coax out of old misers, young skinflints, Jews, and titled and mitred fools, falls into the pockets of the working classes. What would become of Paris without us? What would become of the workpeople? What would become of the artists? It is we who re-establish equality, we who beggar the idle for the profit of the industrious. We turn the tap, and useless treasures, shameful fortunes, millions robbed from the poor, flow forth! We are the canal by which the gold of thieves flows back into the purses of the despoiled. And it is only right, mademoiselle, is it not? Ah! if I had a poet or a novelist among my lovers, I would give him a plot for a masterpiece!"

She laughed aloud, and the merry peal was re-echoed up the monumental staircase. "Will you come with me, mademoiselle?" she asked. "We can have a chat while Virginie dresses me for lunch."

"I am at your orders, madame," replied Andrée.

They climbed the pink marble staircase together, Nana's slippers clacking gaily against her velvety heels. Then they entered the boudoir, followed by Virginie, who commenced to dress her mistress' hair. When Nana was ready she again spoke to Andrée. "Come, pretty one," she said, "you must promise to come and give me some lessons in mounting flowers. I will pay you whatever you like; the terms are of no consequence to me. You please me very much. I should so like to have a daughter like you. I fancy I should love her — I who love nobody and tire of everything. I would leave her my fortune and my contempt for the human species. There would be two of us to chat and laugh at men's stupidity! How funny 'twould be! You are extremely pretty, my dear, and it's very foolish on your part to live as you do, tiring your little fingers and bending your pretty shoulders over your work. You will get ugly if you go on like that, and in a few years you will be an old woman, and then your protector will leave you."

"I have no protector, madame," swiftly returned Andrée, with a blush.

"Ah! it's true, excuse me, I meant to say your husband. But come, my dear, how many hours do you work a day?"

"Twelve hours, madame, in the business season."

"Twelve hours! But, little one, you will grow blind if you go on like that! Have you murdered any one to be condemned to such a life? But you must make heaps of money at it?"

"We earn twelve or fifteen francs, my mother and I — sometimes twenty francs together."

"An hour?"

"No, a day, madame; and we are fortunate. There are some women who don't earn more than a franc and a half."

"And to think that there are fools who are astonished at immorality and feminine vice! Whose fault is it, if virtuous women only earn a franc and a half a day? Come, come, you must agree with me that virtuous women are fools."

"No, madame, they are happier than you."

"Really? Well, I can't understand how a person can possibly be happy in working a great deal to earn merely a few coppers."

"It is simple enough. The man who loves us has confidence in us, and loves us all the more as he can give us his esteem. And his kiss, when he comes home at night-time after work, repays us for our toil far better than all the jewels in the world."

"You are perhaps right, mademoiselle. Our paths are different. All the same, I can't help regretting to see such a pearl of beauty like yourself set, as it were, in a common metal. If you had some stylish dresses, diamonds, horses, and a mansion, all Paris would be at your feet, little one. A frown on your brow would make men turn pale and their hair grow white. Ah! if you only choose, by-and-by, when old age compels me to abdicate, you might succeed me. You would be Nana the Second; I would launch you properly; and you would fly away on the wings of success. You would be a star of the first order; you would have your applauders, your chroniclers, your sculptors, your painters, your photographers. Your portrait would be in every shop-window, and you would be a perfect queen. Believe me, I am really speaking seriously."

"I prefer being loved by the man I love to having a crowd of such adorers at my feet. I am not at all tempted by the costly follies of men. I set a higher price on my love, and I don't think that kings and emperors could ever pay dear enough for the first kiss of a virtuous girl."

"But if you were dressed as you deserve to be, the man you love would find you still prettier and love you all the better! Come, I should like you to judge for yourself. Virginie, bring me the dress I wore at the review. We are of the same height, mademoiselle and I, and my dress will fit her like a glove. Bring the lace petticoat as well, and some silk stockings to match the dress."

Virginie obeyed, and wished to dress Andrée herself. But Nana interposed. "No, leave us!" she said. "I will dress her. I'm sure you would annoy her with your manners."

"I must tell madame that my manners are quite proper," replied Virginie, pinching her lips. "But, of course, it is no business of mine if madame chooses to treat mademoiselle like a doll." And the angry maid thereupon left the room.

Alone with Andrée, Nana threw her arms around her, and kissed her passionately. A strange languor was coming over the young girl in the vitiated atmosphere of the boudoir. Seized with a coquettish desire to look beautiful, she allowed Nana to undress her like a child, and array her in the white satin robe.

But suddenly the door-hanging of the boudoir was raised, and the Marquis D'Albigny, very tall, his head erect, with a black mustache proudly twirled up at either end, and white hands, which seemed formed only to handle a sword or span a woman's waist, appeared smiling upon the threshold.

CHAPTER XV.

ANDRÉE rose to retire, but D'Albigny had perceived her, and stood spellbound by stupefied admiration. "What do you think of her, marquis?" asked Nana.

"Charming, my dear." And approaching the courtesan he kissed her hand, and added, "Thanks, Nana, for this pleasant surprise."

"I didn't do it on purpose, marquis," rejoined Nana, in an undertone; "but you know I am apt to be kind to you."

D'Albigny approached Andrée, and taking one of her tiny hands in his, he softly pressed it and said: "I am happy to see, mademoiselle, that you no longer suffer from the accident which nearly killed us all; and I am inclined to bless that mishap, as it has procured us the pleasure of seeing you. You are charming in that dress; and, without flattery, you look wonderfully like Madame Nana—that is, like the most captivating woman in Paris. Only you are very young. How old are you, pray, if it is not an indiscretion?"

"I am nineteen, sir."

"Nineteen! That would be your daughter's age by now, Nana."

"If Mademoiselle Andrée were my daughter, I should keep her with me, and devote myself to making her happy. She would be my last passion; her triumphs would amuse me. I would set all Paris at her feet, and with my experience of the past I should be the better able to assure her future. Ah! marquis, she would earn her real worth, which she seems to have no idea of now."

"Madame Nana is right, mademoiselle, you have everything to learn. But we would be your instructors, she and I, and introduce you to the life of luxury and opulence that you are fitted for."

"You are very kind, sir," rejoined Andrée, with gentle irony, "but I fear that I shall be condemned to live in humble circumstances all my life. I love my family, and I am about to marry——"

"That tall, young fellow we saw with you, no doubt! He is not bad looking; but he doesn't know how to dress, and the man who is deficient in that gift never becomes anyone. Take myself, for instance; I have spent large sums of money in my time, and although I am head over heels in debt, I live, enjoy myself, and jingle like gold at every step. But why is that? Simply because I know how to walk, how to glove my hands, and how to treat women. Just ask Madame Nana on that last point. It is the essential matter in life; for whatever may be one's sphere there is always a woman around whom we men must gravitate."

At this moment a footman raised the door-hanging, and exclaimed, "Madame is served."

Andrée shuddered. She had recognized the footman's voice. "Come, little one," said Nana, "keep that dress on; it suits you marvelously well. We shall lunch together, all three of us. Your arm, D'Albigny."

The marquis gave Nana his arm, and they passed in front of Andrée. The latter did not feel at ease. She was surprised by the marquis's cavalier manner, and enervated by the strange caresses of this woman, who seemed to take possession of her despite her virtuous resistance, and to circumvent her with her singular sophistry and subversive principles. It seemed to Andrée as if the vertigo of evil had seized hold of her. Her brain was intoxicated and disturbed. She certainly tried to defend herself, to justify the courage she had shown in choosing the pathway of daily toil and chaste affection; and yet her vanity was secretly pleased by the offer of a life of luxury, by the direct proposals of that titled scoundrel, D'Albigny, and by the audacious encouragement and enervating flattery of Nana. There are some evil instincts dormant even in the best of natures, and such as had slept in Andrée's heart and mind were now aroused. The evil dream was, in fact, beginning to please her, when suddenly she was awakened to a sense of reality by the voice of the footman. That voice she knew it well. Its possessor was now a servant, but she had met him as a clown and a police spy. At sight of him it seemed to her as if an alarm-bell were ringing in her conscience. Ah! why had she been weak enough to serve as a toy for such a woman as Nana?

She passed slowly under the silken door-hanging which the tall footman was holding back. He leaned toward her as she approached, and whispered hurriedly, "Pray don't look as if you recognized me, mademoiselle. I am not what I seem to be. I am called Luc, now." And then in a respectful attitude, bol-

upright and slim-looking in his black dress-coat, his face cleanly shaven and his manners perfectly correct, he entered the dining-room behind the young girl.

It was an octagonal apartment of moderate dimensions, paved with Florentine mosaic. The ceiling had somewhat the form of a cupola, from the center of which hung a massive silver chandelier formed of eight cupids with outspread wings, whose feet rested upon a globe, and who each held in one hand a branching candelabrum. Folding doors communicated with an adjoining apartment, and three French windows conducted onto a winding balcony. The room formed part, indeed, of an octagonal tower at one corner of the mansion, and commanded a delightful view of the park. The table was a round one; the china, modern Sèvres, and the glass, Baccarat crystal; Nana's coroneted initial figuring on every object.

D'Albigny sat down near Andrée, Nana placed herself in front of them; and Luc stood in the rear, serving the dishes and pouring out the wine.

"Would you believe it, marquis," said Nana, abruptly, "it seems there are women who live on a franc and a half a day."

"No, really, dear, I can't believe that? for even admitting that the unfortunate creatures wished to do so, they couldn't manage it."

"But come, D'Albigny, picture me, Nana, reduced to live on a franc and a half a day."

"I repeat that it isn't possible, my dear. And you, mademoiselle, do you think that it has ever happened?"

"I have proof of it every day, sir. One of my new work-girls is an orphan who does not earn more."

"She has a lover who supports her, then," said Nana.

"No, madame."

"But how does she contrive to live, then?"

"She spends fifteen sous on her daily food; lodges herself for ten francs a month; makes her own dresses, washes her own linen, never drinks any wine, and never lights a fire."

"Well, really, such a life must be insupportable. It would be better to have never been born than to lead such an existence as that."

"Misfortune may overtake the wealthy, madame. Misery often comes when it is least expected. And what is most terrible is to have to live like these poor creatures, after having lived like you."

"You are jesting, mademoiselle. That has never happened, and never will — eh, D'Albigny?"

"No, certainly not. As long as you are Nana, and as long as I am D'Albigny, we shall have nothing of the kind to fear. As for the others, so much the worse for them."

As soon as the meal was over, Nana rose to go and see her

roses. Turning to the valet, she exclaimed, "Come with me, Luc; you must take my flowers into the gallery, where I shall arrange them by-and-by with this young lady. I shall be back in a moment," she added to Andrée.

The marquis thus remained alone with the girl. Softly, without the least affectation, in fact with the calm ease of a nobleman, he drew near to her and took hold of one of her hands. "Would you like Nana to adopt you, to take you with her and leave you her fortune?" he asked, without the slightest preamble.

"Thanks, sir, I prefer to work."

"But that is unreasonable. It is quite impossible that you prefer a life of slavery to such an existence as we can offer you here."

"I do not wish to renounce either my parents or my betrothed."

"You would not have to renounce your parents. On the contrary, you might be useful to them. And as for your lover, you could marry him, providing he is intelligent, and knows how to bend to the exigencies of modern life. Otherwise, in your own interest, it would be better for you to sacrifice this young man to us. Others will know how to love you, and understand you as you deserve. And if you were willing, I should be most delighted to make you happy without imposing my love upon you like a burden. I have enough experience of life to know that one can't imprison a pretty woman's heart, and that nightingales don't live in cages. I would leave you perfectly free to love this young man, or any other, providing you did not abuse of your liberty to spend your money on them. In present times every one aught to know how to calculate. Gold is the one great disideratum of life. Ah, with me to guide you, you would soon have millions of your own. Your pretty blue eyes would be like the sun that ripens the harvest, and but one kiss from your ruby lips would mean wealth for yourself and for those you love."

"It seems to me that you are insulting me, sir," cried Andrée, who was very red. She spoke these words in a clear, vibrating voice, full of virtuous emotion, and then sprang to her feet as if she feared she had been entrapped. What was that woman, Nana, doing? Why had she taken her servant away, leaving her alone with the marquis? Did she no longer love him? or did the marquis wish to profit by his mistress' absence to play her false?

Andrée understood naught of the monstrosities prevalent in this vicious sphere; but she remembered her adventure with Paillardin, and asked herself if the world was a forest full of scoundrels bent on trapping virtue and insulting women. At

this thought she was seized with bitter disgust for the vicious baseness of man.

"I give you my word of honor," rejoined the marquis, "that my words implied nothing insulting for your beauty. On the contrary, I was trying to make you understand, by metaphors, the very great interest I take in you. And nobody here would venture to behave insolently or improperly with you."

"Then I was under a misapprehension when I attributed an insulting meaning to your proposals. I thought you wished to profit by the circumstance that we were alone, to tell me things I cannot listen to. I must apologize, Monsieur le Marquis, for having for one moment thought you capable of such an act of cowardice."

"Oh, oh! little one, your irony is bitter; but patience, it will wear away. After all, I think it will be better to allow you to indulge in your fancy for that young man. Come, my beauty, make haste to get married. When you have had enough of your lover and virtuous poverty, you will come in search of the Marquis D'Albigny; and, perhaps, he will interest himself on your behalf, providing you are still pretty, of course. Well, go and find Madame Nana, put on your common dress again, and arrange your flowers. You can go, mademoiselle, you can go; I shan't detain you."

He spoke with a smile of disdainful pity. Andrée did not answer him, but opened the door and passed out into the hall. Perceiving Nana, she went toward her, saying: "I regret that I cannot stop any longer, madame, for there is a great deal of work to be done at home, and I must go."

"But why are you so red, my dear; has the marquis been courting you? It's his fashion, you know. He is perpetually at women's feet. The last love-sick shepherd will die with him. But you were wrong to be frightened by his foolish talk. He's a good fellow at the bottom and means well. However, I don't want to vex you. Luc, conduct this young lady to my boudoir, so that she may change her dress again."

Luc escorted Andrée to the boudoir, and as soon as they were alone together he hurriedly began: "You know who I am, mademoiselle; well, listen to me. Never come back here again. This woman is fatal; she would ruin you just as she has ruined me. I'm rising to the surface again, now, and I want to live. I have been stationed here by the prefecture of police, so as to watch the goings on. And I open my eyes and ears both day and night. They are big, my ears, and they hear everything. You remember how the Hercules used to pull them eight summers ago. Ah! what a mass of hatred I've stored up in my heart and mind during those eight years of misery! I hate the whole human species excepting yourself and your father, although he rendered me a sorry service when he pulled me out of the

river. However, nowadays I've an object before me, and a terrible object, too. I mean to cling to this house, to this woman and this marquis, so as to work their ruin as they worked mine. I'll bite away their pedestal bit by bit, and expose them as they really are. I'm somebody now, I am a power. I have the whole police force behind me. I'm no longer a clown, no longer a pauper, no longer a woman-beater as you saw me a few days ago. I belong to the secret service now — but I must let you dress. Good-by, mademoiselle, and take my advice; don't come to this house again. It is a perfect den; a den full of gold, no doubt, but a den, a wild beast's den." Thereupon he went off, and Andrée could hear him repeating in the hall, "Yes, a den, a wild beast's den."

A minute later Virginie entered the boudoir. "I have come to help mademoiselle to dress," she said.

"I am sorry that your mistress disturbed you," replied Andrée. "I am used to waiting on myself." And she rapidly changed her costume, without accepting the help of the maid. In ten minutes she was ready; and she experienced a delicious feeling of relief when she found herself in the street again, in the midst of out-door activity, under the pure blue sky and with the radiant sunlight to guide her homeward steps.

CHAPTER XVI.

That same evening Nana's house was still encumbered with workpeople; and, anxious to escape the disorder, she persuaded D'Albigny to accompany her to Mabille. The garden was being prepared for the evening fête. The ground-glass globes of the girandoles, the ruddy flowers blooming on the branches of the artificial zinc trees, the luminous fruit of the spurious palms, the arcades painted a brilliant green, were all being lighted up; and a mysterious glimmer was wafted over the stalactite cascade, where a statue of Venus stood in semi-obscurity.

When Nana arrived, at about eleven o'clock, her appearance caused a perfect sensation. She wore a robe of black velvet with a long train, a black-felt *mousquetaire* hat with a blue plume, and a set of sapphires; earrings and necklace alike mounted in silver. A quadrille was being danced as she arrived, giving her arm to D'Albigny, and followed by Luc in full livery. The crowd had formed a circle around the paid dancers, who gravely distorted themselves, looking as serious as official personages in the discharge of their functions. The men raised their legs, or bobbed down in spread-eagle fashion, with a posi-

tive air of importance. Still there was one little fellow worth seeing, for he disjointed his limbs in the strangest fashion, and assumed the most improbable postures. He had a comical face, moreover, and his gestures were so fanciful that he fairly diverted the spectators. The women meanwhile caught up their skirts, and swayed about, kicking up their high-heeled boots to the delight of several fat English tourists, who had come to see the fun with their wives. These highly-respectable ladies looked extremely glum; and the horrified expression of some of their faces contrasted strangely with the broad smiles in which their husbands indulged. One of the female dancers, an ex-star of the Quartier Latin, renowned for her intimacy with a famous one-eyed orator, was most skillful in knocking off the hats of the masculine spectators with the tip of her cherry-satin boot. Her spirit and vivacity fairly sent the gallery into transports of delight. It was a most attentive gallery, by the way, and, evidently enough, the great majority of the people present were anxious not to lose a single detail of the disgraceful exhibition. True, the English ladies and the French provincial families in the front ranks watched the scene with an air of consternation. But these were the exceptions, and among the attentive ones, none gazed more steadily than the white-haired old beaux with blotched and wrinkled faces.

When Nana appeared, however, there was a stir, and popular curiosity was diverted from the Terpsichorean display. As if she had been formally announced by one of the ushers — who, with steel chains over their shoulders, were watching the dances — her name spread through the close ranks of the spectators; and as her blue plume waved, and her tawny hair flashed in the light, a host of mute admirers ranged themselves in a line to see her pass along. She walked as far as the covered gallery, where the dancing took place on rainy evenings, and then sat down with the marquis, Luc standing bolt upright behind her chair.

She had evidently just asked some question of D'Albigny, for he began to say: "This is what I can tell you on the matter, my dear. I made inquiries at the foundling hospital, as I promised to do, and — thanks to the influence of a very powerful friend — I obtained, from the Poor Relief Board, some information which is never given to outsiders. I have, indeed, positively learned what has become of your daughter. And see how surely your instinct has guided you! — that girl Andrée, who is supposed to be the Naviels' daughter — that little flower-girl whom you found so pretty, and who resembles you like eglantine resembles roses; well, that very girl is your child! She is only the adopted daughter of the workpeople who brought her up. When she learns that you are her real mother, she won't ong hesitate about returning to you. There are hereditarly

fatalities, you know; and that girl must have somewhat of your terrible temperament, you woman of fire!"

"But, having lived in such a different sphere, the fire you speak of must be extinguished. Those people must have thrown dust on her flaming youth, and it is evidently too late ——"

"Not at all, Nana. Claim her from these people, who must consider her to be a sacred deposit, and who must be too honest to detain such a treasure as that girl is, when they learn that you are her real mother, and can prove it beyond a doubt."

"But, my dear fellow, the girl is charming. I should go mad over her. I should play mamma with her; and—who knows?—I am fantastic enough to feel jealous of the men she may love. I may want to keep her all to myself."

"Oh! in that case, let her remain a flower-girl, then; for if you ceased living your present existence you would be altogether done for. Maternal virtue is like all others; it brings wrinkles, whitens the hair, and turns the complexion yellow. Suppose you had a baby, and took to bringing it up at your own breast. Why, given all the circumstances, you would be an old woman in a month's time! And, even as matters stand, you are getting on, mind. I speak to you as a friend, frankly, without flattering. Nobody else would do so, no doubt; the others are all too afraid of you. Still, they would have their thoughts on the matter, and, although they are slavish courtiers, and kiss your boots now that you are the queen, they wouldn't hesitate to spit on your skirts if ever you lost your sceptre. If you think of becoming a mother again, merely by way of penance—if you have no practical object in claiming this girl—why, you had better remain Nana as you are. You have still some years to sparkle. But I trust you will be practical. And if you decide to utilize this girl in our mutual interest, say the word, and I will go with you to her home. We shall then see if she will resist your entreaties when she hears that you are her mother. Of course, you must learn how to play a mother's part properly; how to affect emotion, tenderness and passion. You must cry if your daughter refuses to follow you, and when you have your arms around her hold fast and take her away. I will charge myself with the rest. But, as I said before, it will no doubt cost you a few tears. You are altogether irresistible when you cry, Nana! Why, I myself have been caught by your tears. You are so deuced clever when you choose."

"I am afraid that the girl's lover will bother us. She's mad on marrying him."

"So much the better, my dear. We'll find a position for him if he needs one. People will approve of you marrying your daughter, and few will suspect that you only do so to be able to dispose of her under cover of her husband."

"Don't talk so horribly, D'Albigny. Supposing you were overheard?"

"People would think me dangerous, and I should be feared all the more. Halloa! here's Mulhausen coming toward us."

The prince was indeed approaching, walking very pompously, his massive form stiffly erect in the true Teutonic style, and a serious expression on his red-whiskered face. In hopes that he might look more of a Frenchman, he had recently taken to wearing a gold-rimmed eyeglass, and continually bit either the tortoise-shell handle of his crutch-stick, or the left point of his twirling mustache.

"How do you do, my dear prince?" inquired the marquis. "Have you recovered from your emotion?"

"And you, marquis?" asked the prince.

"My dear Mulhausen," said Nana, "you ought to know that D'Albigny is not subject to emotion. As for myself, I am not yet consoled. My two blackamoors are dead, and three of my horses also. True, I have one left; and, by the way, if you like I will make you a present of it."

"Thank you, madame, but Prussia requires my services, and your Parisian coachman don't know how to drive. I have renewed my horses, grooms and coachmen alike, since that accident. And my new men and my new animals all come from Germany. They will have their first outing to-morrow for your fête. By the way, have you written to Stog?"

"I should think so," said D'Albigny. "Nana sent him a registered letter this very evening, and here is a copy of it." So saying, the marquis drew a sheet of paper from his pocket-book and handed it to the prince.

Mulhausen settled his glasses on his nose, and then read in an undertone: "If Monsieur Stog does not come as he promised, I shall believe that he is afraid either of myself or of D'Albigny. I certify that the marquis had not furnished Monsieur Stog with the slightest pretext to retreat.—NANA."

"He will be mad enough to come," remarked the prince.

"Oh, I shall regret him!" sighed Nana. "He pleased me with his brutal frankness; but he hated D'Albigny, and the marquis is too valuable a friend for me to hesitate about sacrificing Stog."

"You are right," cried the German. "Ah! I recognize you there. Besides, that fellow Stog annoyed me with his bravado, and if D'Albigny had not taken upon himself to rid you of the fool, I should have been only too happy to render you such a trifling service."

"If you prefer to do the work yourself, my dear Mulhausen," said D'Albigny, ironically, "I won't stand in your way. I'll withdraw."

"But you can't, marquis; for it was you that he insulted. If

he had acted like that with me, I shouldn't have waited a week before claiming satisfaction."

"Do you mean that for a lesson, prince?"

"I! not at all. You have no need of teaching, my dear marquis."

"Quite so, my dear Mulhausen," exclaimed Nana. "And, do you know, you ought not to play the part of a professor of bravery. It doesn't suit you. Lessons of that kind are not quite in your line."

The German bit his mustache feverishly, but the incident went no further; for at that moment a servant in a blue livery was seen elbowing his way through the crowd, evidently in search of some one. "Ah! there comes Stog's answer!" said D'Albigny, and turning toward the tall, clean-shaven footman, who stood impassively behind Nana's chair, he added: "Go and say that we are here, Luc."

Luc went off and speedily returned with the other servant. Nana opened the telegram which was handed to her, and read as follows: "I shall have the honor of complying with your invitation, and shall introduce two of my friends to you.—STOG."

"Very good," muttered Mulhausen. "I fancy that Stog is done for."

The fête was now in full swing and the orchestra was playing one of Métra's mazurkas. The crowd pressed forward to see the dancers, who revolved with maddening motion in the full light. The women threw themselves backward, with their heads resting on the shoulders of their partners, who danced with their hats falling over their necks, and with their legs wide apart, looking, indeed, for all the world, like satyrs in nineteenth-century costume. And all around, worthless women, freshly painted and plastered, were promenading to and fro, dragging their trains over the gravel, and shaking their diamond eardrops in the gaslight.

"Let us go home!" said Nana, at last. "It is so awfully slow."

The marquis rose at once and allowed Nana to take Mulhausen's arm, while he himself approached a fencing-hall friend and whispered a few words in his ear.

"It will be for to-morrow evening, then?" asked the friend.

"Probably," rejoined D'Albigny.

"I shall be at your disposal, my dear marquis."

"I relied on you."

"And you did quite right. Who is the other second?"

"The Prince of Mulhausen."

Then having shaken hands with his friend, the marquis followed Nana and the prince, who were walking away followed by the two blue-liveried servants. As usual, Luc's features were

impassive; but there was a tragic gleam in the depths of his fish-like eyes.

CHAPTER XVII.

WELL-NIGH twenty years had elapsed since Luc had been Nana's lover, and he was not recognizable. Constant misery, both moral and physical, had made him very lean. His fall dated from the day when he had borrowed ten thousand francs from his employer's safe in order to purchase his daughter from Nana. She had disdainfully rejected the stolen gold, and had caused him to be arrested just as he was about to make full restitution. Fortunately for Luc, he established his intention to refund the money sufficiently clearly to succeed in avoiding a sentence, but on his release from jail he found himself altogether without resources. Conscious of his unworthiness, he then glided down the slope of Bohemian existence, living by charity or expedients, employing well-known names to solicit loans, and coining money as best he could. Still, despite his fall and his indignity, he often regretted his past honorability, and longed to rise to the surface again. When he thought of the woman who had ruined him, who had robbed him of both his honor and his child, he was seized with a strange passionate rage, compounded of desire, jealousy, hatred, and regret. He wished he could have torn his heart out of his breast to crush it beneath his heel — but it lived, this heart of his. It was fired with old recollections of volcanic intensity; and his mind would dwell upon plans of vengeance.

Thus he lived on with his fixed remorse, poor, lonely, lost in the hungry crowd. At times he would have given his whole life to have been able to kiss his child but once. Little girls of the same age long inspired him with convulsive tenderness, and he had been greatly struck with Andrée on the day he met her at St. Cloud, and invited her into the wrestling-booth. On that occasion Nana also had shown herself, in the company of D'Albigny, but she had scarcely recognized her old lover, the ex-cashier. After that Face-to-Smack abandoned his calling as a mountebank, and fell into an even more miserable condition. Hard times aged him to such a degree that nobody would have taken him for the same man. Tired of life, he one day tried to kill himself; and, but for Naviel, it would have been all over with him. Once saved, he lacked the courage to try suicide over again; so he enlisted in the public morality police force, which, by a lucky chance, was then recruiting men.

After that he at least had regular meals; but he lived in daily communion with vice. By the ferocious zeal with which he discharged his functions he rapidly rose in favor with his superiors.

It was known that he had never shown any weakness with the women he was appointed to watch, and the authorities decided to call him to more important duties. It was a wonderful chance for him. The government wished to have some one on the watch in Nana's house — in the palace of this queen of vice — whither political personages and wealthy foreigners flocked in shoals, which the postmaster-general visited, where the Prince of Mulhausen displayed himself, and where numerous hypocritical Jesuits congregated, scattering gold with lavish hands. The authorities wished to know the truth about D'Albigny, whose money-mongering practices were being watched; and a man with open eyes and ears was needed to penetrate the secrets of this laboratory of vice and peculation. Nana's ex-lover, the cashier, had showed himself especially fitted for such a post, and thus he obtained it.

It precisely happened that Nana needed two servants to fill the places of the blackamoors who had been killed. Her old lover applied for one of the situations and was not recognized. He had suffered so much during twenty years. He had become so thin and wrinkled by his long agony. Naturally enough, he produced superb certificates, and was accepted at once. At the end of a few days, however, his old passion for Nana was aroused again. The constant sight of this woman, who had lost nothing of her former power of seduction, who sparkled indeed more brilliantly and terribly than in her youth, completely upset the ex-mountebank's troubled mind. It was with painful surprise and terrible anguish that he saw Andrée arrive at the house, and learned by D'Albigny's talk at Mabille that this charming young girl was Nana's daughter. The certainty dawned upon him that Andrée must be his own child, and he divined that the marquis and the harlot were plotting together to turn this virtuous, industrious maiden from the path of duty. Then there arose a terrible struggle in his mind — a struggle between his old love for the mother and his innate affection for the child. The image of Nana rose before him; he longed to clasp her in his arms once more, and then slay her with his own hand, so that she might remain forever faithful to him. And, on the other hand, he was seized with the desire to save Andrée, his own dear, fair-haired Andrée, from the villainous enterprises of D'Albigny and the shameful speculations of her mother.

It was this combination of thoughts that imparted a tragic gleam to Luc's eyes, as on leaving Mabille he walked with his fellow-servant behind Nana and the marquis. The moon was rising, and a silvery glimmer was spreading over the trees in the Champs Elysées. Three or four long white clouds floated like feathers in the blue expanse. A heavy heat weighed upon everything. The leafy branches, whitened by the moonlight,

bent under the effect of the warmth which rose from the chalky soil into the fever-tempered atmosphere.

On reaching the house, Luc, whose duties were over, took refuge in his attic under the roof. From his tiny oval casement he could perceive Nana's window in the center of the principal building, perpendicular to the wing of which he occupied one corner. Often, after extinguishing his candle at night-time, he had opened his window and watched Nana's shadow passing behind the silken curtains; and often, also, had he seen the outline of a lover's figure. Then he would bite his fists so as not to cry out aloud with rage in the midst of the silent night. But that evening his passion was so intense that he felt he could not control it. His old love burned anew, and jealous fury seized hold of him. And above his revolting passion there soared the image of Andrée, whom he must save. All his remaining intelligence was concentrated on the solution of this problem: clasp this woman a last time in his arms, punish her for her treachery of years ago, and save his daughter Andrée.

Despite imprisonment and misery, he had for twenty years been able to hide and preserve the little stiletto with an onyx handle, the same with which he had, once already, tried to stab the harlot; he wore it near his breast, secured like a relic by a silken cord. Having extinguished his candle, he now went to his casement and looked out into the silvery night toward Nana's window, which had remained open on account of the heat. Through the partially-closed curtains he could see that she was preparing to retire to rest. Virginie divested her of her black-velvet bodice, her earrings and necklet of sapphires, and unhooked her skirts, which fell upon the carpet. Nana next stretched herself back on a couch while the maid unbuttoned her high-heeled satin boots and took off her stockings. Then the courtesan rose up and for a moment approached her window, appearing in all her majestic beauty under the light of the chandelier, which fell upon her curved shoulders and streaming hair. A moment later, however, she went back into her room again, and all that Luc could see was her shadow, which grew larger and larger upon the curtains as she walked toward her bed.

Luc took off his boots so as not to make a noise, and glided out of his attic down the servants' staircase to the first floor, where he turned into a passage leading to the ante-room of Nana's private apartments. He concealed himself here behind some hangings, and scarcely had he done so when Virginie came out of Nana's room, leaving the door wide open on account of the excessive heat. The maid passed close to the spot where Luc was stationed, and her elbow even brushed against the old tapestry which concealed him in its ample folds. Then he heard her walking down the passage by which he had come,

and he found himself alone — alone, near the woman whom he had so madly loved, and close to the very spot where, twenty years previously, he had so fruitlessly implored her to give him his child, or else to live with him in courageous, toilsome poverty. Not only, however, had she refused to follow him, not only had she concealed the fate of his daughter from him, but she had dishonored him as well.

From the spot where he was crouching, through the woof of the old tapestry, worn by years, he could plainly distinguish Nana's bed. The large silver eagle, which hovered over her slumbers, glittered in the soft light of an Oriental lamp. The glimmer stretched as far as the head of the sleeping woman, who had scarcely drawn the silken coverlid over her, so great was the stormy heat. The fine linen sheet had been cast aside, and one could see her bare white bosom, her tapering hands crossed with adorable nonchalance, and her statuesque arms, the exquisite roundness of which was partially obscured by the blue shadow of the bed-hangings. A moonbeam which peered between the window curtains glided across the floor and rose upright against the wall. Nana's dreams were happy ones, no doubt, for her sensual mouth was parted in a bacchante-like smile, her pearl-like teeth glistening betwixt the purple ruddiness of her curved lips.

Luc could resist no longer; with the dagger still in his hand he entered the room. He must strike first of all, wreak vengeance upon her, and then punish himself; so that they could both die mingling their blood together upon that fatal couch. He drew nearer and nearer, and snapping the cord which secured the weapon to his neck, he raised his arm. The dagger glittered in the light. But at that moment a hairy paw clutched hold of Luc's wrist from behind, and grasped it so tightly that the weapon fell to the floor. Then a second paw fell upon the servant's shoulder, with such weight that he dropped upon his knees in front of the bed.

Yorick, the gorilla, had come to the rescue. But Luc's left hand had remained free, and he was able to grasp his dagger once more. He must, at any cost, vanquish this terrible guardian, and just as the gorilla tried to seize him by the throat he profited of an opportunity to raise his arms and plunge the dagger to the very hilt into the animal's side. Yorick gave a terrible groan and then fell back upon the carpet.

Nana awoke with a start and opened her eyes. She could see poor Yorick dragging himself toward the bed and looking at her in distress. But before he could reach her his limbs stiffened and he again fell on the carpet — this time, dead.

Luc had already fled and Nana had not seen him. She sprang out of bed and tried to raise her faithful guardian. In doing so she perceived the weapon in the wound. She vaguely recollected

that she had once possessed this dangerous toy and had given it to some one. To whom? She could not remember with precision. Had some unknown enemy, some old lover, ignominiously dismissed, succeeded in entering her room while she was asleep? Was her life threatened by some plan of vengeance? Brave as she was, she could not suppress a shudder, and after lighting a candle and donning a dressing-gown, she went to rouse the marquis and tell him of her alarm.

CHAPTER XVIII.

At ten o'clock on Sunday evening the first carriages drew up outside Nana's house, and the crowd of guests spread through the splendidly-illuminated reception-rooms. The supper-table was laid at the end of the conservatory, where the orchestra-stand, hung with blue velvet, had also been erected. Through the exuberant foliage of the exotic plants one could see the silver and the crystal sparkling. Six footmen in dress-coats, breeches and silk stockings, with silver chains around their necks, stood on either side of the snowy damask cloth. Four other footmen were appointed to relieve the gentlemen of their overcoats and the ladies of their cloaks.

Luc stood on the pink-marble steps distributing the programme of a concert which was to begin at eleven o'clock. The four reception-rooms soon filled with a crowd of dress-coats adorned with foreign decorations. The masculine element, indeed, was altogether the more numerous one. The feminine public was mostly composed of actresses, stars of the *demi-monde*, and female authors who had lost caste — almost all of them being attracted to the fête by a longing to study Nana's opulence; some by a wish to obtain material for a sensational story; others by a desire to form an acquaintance with the men of the time who flocked to the gathering, the journalists on the look-out for suggestive anecdotes, and the caricaturists in quest of types.

The Marquis d'Albigny and Nana were stationed in the first room, where they received their guests, when the latter's names had been announced in a loud voice by the major-domo at the door. The concert was held in the apartment farthest from the hall. It could be reached either by crossing the three other saloons, or by following the gallery. The spacious park with its groups of marble statuary rising amid palm trees, orange trees and pomegranates, was illuminated by the electric light; but here and there shady corners had been reserved for couples partial to flirtation. The artistes engaged for the concert met with tremendous success, and at midnight, when the programme

was exhausted, Nana was begged to sing. Although she possessed a superb voice and great musical talent, she did not sing in public as a rule, and in spite of the numerous requests now addressed to her, she persisted in refusing. The Prince of Mulhausen, who was extremely fond of music, pleaded the general cause with true German tenacity, but he completely failed in his endeavors, and Nana even said to him, "I can't possibly grant to you, prince, what I have just refused to my compatriots; the newspapers would very properly censure me."

She made this reply in a harsh tone, which was not usual with her on such occasions. Whenever she gave a grand fête she liked to divest herself of her haughty brutality and treat the least important of her guests with charming deference. But she was very feverish that evening. The emotion of the previous night, the mystery surrounding the fate of Yorick, her dumb slave, killed with that little onyx-hilted dagger which arose out of the past full of threats for the future; the expected visit of Stog, the Postmaster-General, whose coming was fraught with danger for her confidant and adviser, D'Albigny — all this transformed her and made her superstitiously nervous.

Suddenly the servant entrusted with the duty of announcing the guests raised his voice, exclaiming, "Monsieur Stog, Director-General of the Postal Services." And then followed two other names, which Nana was unacquainted with, but which must be those of the seconds whom Stog had brought with him. There was a sudden movement amid the crowd of black coats. It seemed as if there was something vaguely tragical in the atmosphere. The death of Yorick had been spoken of by some of the servants, and the story had been whispered round the reception-rooms. There were all sorts of rumors abroad. It was said that Stog was madly in love with Nana; that he was bent upon killing D'Albigny and others who excited his jealousy, and that he had only come to this fête in view of insulting them in the crowded ball-room. Certain chats between the marquis and the prince, remarks which had been made by the friend whom the former had spoken with at Mabille, chance words which had been overheard, were extremely suggestive of a duel.

Stog went straight toward Nana, elbowing his way through the crowd of courtiers. His white, brush-like hair glistened in the light of the chandeliers. There was a stern look in his eyes, his cheeks were very red, and his mustaches pointed like sword-blades. "I hear," said he to Nana, "that you refuse to sing, or rather to enchant us. If you persist in your refusal I shall believe that it is I who frighten you."

He emphasized these last words, which were fraught with defiance, as Nana very well understood, for she answered: "To rid you of that idea I will make an exception to my ordinary rule."

Stog offered her his arm, which she accepted, and they walked across the reception-rooms toward the piano. Several servants were already clearing away the seats used during the concert, so as to allow plenty of room for the dancers. The male guests were on their way to the card-room or the smoking-room; and the women were promenading about with such cavalieri serventi as they had picked up. However, as soon as Nana was seen approaching the piano on Stog's arm, a general "hush!" resounded, silencing the chattering guests and clanging instruments which the musicians were tuning for the ball. The concert-room was again invaded. People sat down here and there in confusion or stowed themselves away in corners; and three footmen with well-oiled hair and curly whiskers, who were caught in the throng, remained standing bolt upright amid the chairs, with their arms crossed. The pianist had already hastened to the spot, and in obedience to Nana's instructions he began to play the prelude to the famous aria of Meyerbeer's opera, *L'Africaine*—the *mancenillier*. Nana sang this splendid song in marvelous style, and when she delivered the final words—so full of bitter, terrible despair, "Adieu, Vasco, my well beloved," the occupants of the four reception-rooms fairly quivered with enthusiasm.

The emotion which Nana felt lent additional radiance to her beauty. Her expressive lips seemed to sing even for the eyes. An ardent flame sparkled with golden radiance in her own green orbs, and her tawny hair, caught up in a coil at the back of her head, emitted sunlike rays. She wore a wreath of diamond daisies mounted on flexible stalks, which as they waved increased the sparkle of the jewels. Her earrings were two daisies of similar style, and the same flowers scintillated on the blue-satin shoes encasing her tiny feet. Her dress was of blue China satin cut very low, trimmed with twelve little flounces of *point d'Angleterre* in front and forming a long train behind. Round her neck, upon the magical whiteness of her bare bosom, she wore a triple necklace of pearls.

Her success both as a beauty and a vocalist was complete. Nothing was wanting, not even the criticisms of three old blue-stockings who had grown old in poverty, and who were intensely jealous of the vicious splendor which humiliated their impecunious virtue. While the three old women were cackling with truly feminine envy the guests poured out of the concert-room, and the black coats rushed like savages toward the buffet. Dresses were trodden on and women were knocked aside as the sterner sex poured into the gallery, where voices soon rose in animated talk, amid anxious and often stormy appeals to the grave-looking servants who cut up the viands with a pontifical air, and poured out the famous vintages with as much solemnity as if they were serving holy water.

Luc passed by, holding in the air a plate upon which a pheasant's wing was lying. Twenty eager arms were raised at once and disputed with frantic gestures for the prize. It was Mulhausen who eventually succeeded in capturing it, and taking refuge in a corner he began to devour the pheasant's wing with princely voracity, feeling as proud of his triumph as of a German victory. A moment afterward, Stog passed near him and asked, "What have you done with *Monsieur* D'Albigny, prince?"

"Have you come here to insult the marquis?" asked Mulhausen, with his mouth full. "This is hardly the moment to do so."

"One can't insult *Monsieur* D'Albigny," rejoined Stog.

"Because one doesn't dare to!" exclaimed the marquis, who had elbowed his way through the throng upon hearing his name pronounced.

Stog's eyes flashed fire; and wrenching the plate out of Mulhausen's hands he threw it in D'Albigny's face.

"Very good," said the marquis, coldly, "I don't need more to kill you."

"At once, if you choose, I have my two seconds here."

D'Albigny pointed to the prince. "Here is one of mine," he said.

"And here is the other," rejoined a voice in the rear; and the friend whom D'Albigny had met at Mabille approached with his crush hat under his arm and bowed all round: "Let us take two cabs and go to the Bois. There is a bright moonlight," he suggested.

"That's useless," rejoined D'Albigny, "the fencing hall, here, will do very well; we can lock the door."

There was a general gesture of acquiescence, and then the six men left the gallery.

CHAPTER XIX.

While this incident took place, Nana was at the other end of the gallery giving some directions to the *chef d'orchestre*. The throng was so compact, and the tumult so great, that she heard nothing of the altercation. In fact, only the people close to the buffet knew of the outrageous manner in which Stog had provoked D'Albigny. The orchestra now struck up a waltz, the younger men darted forth in search of partners, and for five minutes or so any number of black backs could be seen bobbing and bowing in front of white shoulders. The ball began.

Nana was at once surrounded by a circle of admirers, who begged her to grant them the favor of a polka or a waltz. "I never dance," she replied.

"Just as you never sing," remarked an English lord who formed one of the circle.

"Come, *milord*, I will make an exception for you," rejoined Nana, and she swept away with him amid the lace, the silk and the diamonds which were whirling around in the brilliant light cast by the chandeliers.

As soon as the dance was over the couples poured into the gallery, clustering in front of the buffet where the champagne corks were popping gaily, while the golden wine was poured into the crystal goblets. In the park, meanwhile, amorous intrigues were beginning. The moon was opening its white eye in the blue heavens. A warm perfume ascended from the rose bushes in full bloom; and the aroma of the flowers, studding the dark-green foliage, sped through the atmosphere like the breath of kisses. In the far-off splendor of the sky smiling stars were lighting up the pure night, where all would have been hushed but for the passionate vibration of the violins and the soft sighs of the silver flutes. Pretty women, who held up their trains as the pathways were damp, strolled about leaning on the arms of their cavaliers, to whom the semi-darkness suggested the lover's first audacity—a kiss. One could hear the soft murmur of a fountain plashing in the center of the lawn under the shade of a weeping willow; and from afar off came the hum of Paris like the continuous roll of the rising tide.

After the waltz, Nana looked for D'Albigny. She could not bear the thought of a duel between these two men, one of whom greatly interested her, whilst the other was indispensable. She wished to speak to the marquis, turn him from his purpose and prevent the hostile meeting. She began to fear that if the adventure finished tragically, a compromising scandal would arise. "Where is the marquis?" she asked of Luc whom she met in the hall.

"I think I saw him go into the park, madame."

"Go and look for him, then," said Nana; "and if you find him, tell him that I wish to speak to him and that I am waiting for him here."

She leaned on the sill of one of the open windows of the hall, whence she looked down upon the illuminated lawns and pathways. The *coup d'œil* was one of extreme beauty, and her vanity was well pleased by the thought that this fête was the outcome of her own loveliness. In a few weeks she had called into being this princely mansion, where all the powers of the earth flocked to kiss her sandals. All this gold, all this marble, all these hangings, all these works of art; statues, bronzes, figures of Hercules and Venus, satyrs and bacchantes, all this precious furniture, all these artistic conceptions were her children, called into being by her orgies. Even the pure heavens studded with stars lent their illumination to her park, the product of her

impurity. In presence of all this splendor it indeed seemed to her that she was omnipotent. Her fancy increased the scope of the fatal part she played—the part of an implacable despot reigning over human folly, with far more independence than any royal mistress could enjoy. She, Nana, was no one man's mistress, were he either king or prince; she governed with absolute sway the vices of a generation, of a whole race; she was, as it were, the favorite of a century.

Suddenly her glance fell upon a lighted window in the left wing of the house. It was the window of the fencing hall, and shadows were passing swiftly to and fro upon the curtains. It seemed to Nana as if she could see two colossal swords standing out against the luminous background. All at once one of the weapons darted swiftly across the curtain in a horizontal line, and she saw that it struck one of the human shadows, which fell backward onto the floor.

"Ah! the die is cast," she muttered, "it is time to go in and gamble."

Several couples returning from the park were now mounting the grand staircase. The trains of the women's dresses rustled over the pink-marble steps; and beautiful bare shoulders glistened with statuesque whiteness under the luminous rays of the great chandelier hanging between the double spirals of the staircase. The black coats with their raven-like tails contrasted strongly with the light skirts and bodices. The women, heated by stolen kisses or promised favors, had delightful flushes on their cheeks, while their cavaliers, with shiny hair and curled whiskers, tried to compose their faces and reassume the correct gravity of serious-minded men, now that they found themselves again in the full glare of the gaslight.

As Nana crossed the hall she met the rajah, whom some years before she had ruined in a week's time. He had just returned from Benares with a fresh fortune, and fresh diamonds, attracted to Europe again by his recollection of Nana, and a desire to see her once more. She took his arm at once and thereupon exclaimed: "Come, my dear, I was waiting for you, I was thinking of you." Then drawing him into the card-room, she added: "You know, prince, I often lose, but I never pay."

He smiled resignedly with the sadness of a fatalist, and murmured: "I have returned because your beauty called me, because your serpent's eyes fascinated me in spite of absence, and because the women of my own land no longer appealed to my heart. I have returned so that you may make me your slave." And then obedient to her gesture he sat down at a table in front of her.

The room was draped with myrtle-tinted velvet. A number of men, still young in years but almost all of them bald-headed, were grouped around the tables, covered with green baize. The

jingle of gold was the only noteworthy sound, for every one spoke in whispers and in monosyllables. The joyous strains of the ball-room barely penetrated through the closed doors. Nana and the rajah began to play at écarté, and she had just lost the first game when Luc entered the room. "Where is the marquis?" asked Nana.

"I have not been able to find him, madame; only I have just heard that he has been fighting a duel with Monsieur Stog."

"Is he wounded?"

"I was told that he was dead."

"Dead!"

"It was certain to happen," said the rajah. "I returned on purpose to kill him myself."

"You?"

"Yes, I!"

Nana's eyes flashed fire, and catching hold of the Hindu's wrists, she shook him roughly and cried: "I bet that it was you who murdered Yorick!"

Luc turned very pale and left the room; and the rajah, who did not understand this charge, made no reply. But Nana interpreted his silence as an acknowledgment. With a violent kick she overturned the card-table, and walking toward the smoking-room, by which the fencing-hall was reached through the marquis's private apartments, she cried: "Woe to you, rajah, if ever you show yourself in my presence again!"

He rose up and went out into the hall with martyr-like impassibility. His features had become as hardened as if they had been of bronze. At the top of the steps stood Luc, who, as the rajah approached, bent forward and whispered to him: "There is some one here, prince, to stand between her and you."

"Who?"

"Myself."

"Will you avenge me?"

"Yes, and myself at the same time."

"Then take this poison for her and this jewel for yourself." And so saying the rajah held out a tiny capsule and a ring adorned with a large diamond.

"Keep the ring, prince, I can only accept the poison," said the footman.

"I never take back what I have once given," rejoined the Hindu, with Oriental emphasis, and throwing the diamond ring away he slowly descended the pink steps, draped in his ample cloak of white cashmere.

CHAPTER XX.

MEANWHILE Nana had darted through the library, which for this occasion had been turned into a smoking-room. The fencing-hall was close by, beyond D'Albigny's private apartment. Nana was on the point of entering the marquis' sanctum when the Aubusson tapestry making the door was drawn aside and D'Albigny in person appeared upon the threshold.

"It is all over," said he.

"Stog is dead, then?"

"Probably, as I am here."

"Ah! so much the better."

"Especially for me."

"For both of us. But where is Mulhausen?"

"He is looking for you."

"Tell me what happened. I wish to know everything."

"Willingly. Only let us return into the crush. It is necessary that we should show ourselves. Take my arm."

They returned into the ball by way of the vestibule. A quadrille was being walked at this moment and the fête was at its height. The women were especially gay, and the surrounding luxury which they secretly envied seemed to have prompted them to additional coquetry toward their partners. The latter, somewhat stiff, as they perhaps feared being drawn into an intrigue they did not care for, received the advances of their companions politely but nothing more.

Ranged around the rooms or grouped in chattering parties one could see various old women — actresses' mothers, no doubt; some of them puffed out with fat, others dried up, wrinkled and creased by age like useless parchment; some serious and silent; others very jovial and affable. They nearly all of them watched their daughters dancing. The girls with their spirits and freshness, their beaming laughter and deceitful little feet bobbing in and out under their waving skirts, seemed to the old women like a vision of their own distant youth passing before their weakened eyes. And all these fat or wrinkled mothers, all these spectres of the past, now reduced to playing the part of caryatides in the ball-room, experienced personal delight, a singular feeling of satisfied vanity, at seeing their daughters courted with timid respect by the well-dressed young men, their partners.

After promenading through the four reception-rooms Nana entered the gallery, still leaning on the marquis' arm. She took a *bombe au kirsch* at the buffet, and when she had finished she said to D'Albigny: "Mulhausen is no doubt in the card-room. Let us go there; and tell me the story of the duel."

"It isn't long to relate, my dear. Stog wasn' strong enough to measure himself against the Marquis d'Albigny. On the

other hand he conducted himself properly enough, and began by flinging a plate in my face — a plate which he wrested from Mulhausen who, with his usual Germanic phlegm, was quietly finishing a pheasant's wing, while Stog and I exchanged the most cutting words. You should have seen what a face Mulhausen made when he lost both his plate and his grub! However, as the whole affair had been arranged beforehand, our seconds joined us at once, and we locked ourselves into the fencing-hall. Then Stog and I, we took off our coats and waistcoats, while one of his seconds went to fetch a pair of swords he had left in his carriage. We drew lots, and it was decided that the duel should take place with Stog's weapons. Mulhausen measured them and they proved to be of equal length. The seconds took up their positions. We felt each other a bit, and after several passes I finally lodged a couple of inches of steel in Stog's sternum. I presume that his seconds picked him up and took him off. To tell you the truth, as I perceived that he was badly hurt I immediately left the field, or rather the fencing-hall, to come and reassure you."

Nana and D'Albigny reached the card-room just as this story was finished. They found Mulhausen there, looking for them. He was very merry and very defiant, laughing loudly and striving to seem witty.

"Thanks to our friend D'Albigny," he said with his German accent, "the fatherland has won a victory here this evening. France counts a man the less! Poor France, it is very sad; she doesn't count many men like Stog." In his excessive mirth the German prince then rubbed his be-ringed hands together. On perceiving Nana he walked heavily toward her, took hold of both of her wrists and kissed them, sighing: "Well, my dear, so you are rid of a troublesome and impecunious adorer. Besides, if D'Albigny hadn't killed him, I was there, and——"

"Mulhausen hasn't digested his pheasant yet," interrupted the marquis.

"We certainly had an account to settle together, Stog and I," rejoined the prince in a louder key. He was always brave when he thought there was no danger.

"Here I am!" replied a voice from behind the door-hanging of the smoking-room.

The Prince of Mulhausen turned deadly pale. Then the hanging was slowly raised and Stog appeared leaning on his two seconds. "Prince," he said, "I want to pay my debts — before I die. With pistols — here at once!"

"I can't fight with you," stammered Mulhausen, "it would be cowardice on my part."

"You prove yourself a greater coward, sir, by setting yourself up as a spadassin behind the back of a man whom you fancied was dead. You do not dare to look death in the face."

"I respect your condition, sir."

Stog made a supreme effort. Assisted by his friends he went as far as the first card-table, where he remained standing sustained by his savage energy. For a moment he was silent, and then in a broken voice he exclaimed: "Listen, all of you here present — this is my last confession. I had a family — a home, it was my duty to have lived there — but I had the weakness — to love — that woman," and so speaking he stretched out his arm toward Nana. "Ah! I would have sold my soul — for her — I abandoned those who are waiting for me at home — I betrayed my duties as a functionary — death saves me! — go away, young men — your place is not here — seek love elsewhere — in this room there is a woman who robs and a man who mur ——"

He was interrupted by a jet of blood which flowed from his mouth and stifled him. He escaped from the hands that supported him and fell heavily against the card-table, which was covered with the stakes abandoned by the players, whom this sudden drama had driven into the corners of the room. The table was overturned, the gold rolled over the carpet, and Stog himself would have fallen upon it if his seconds had not caught him in their arms. "Take me away!" he gasped, "I will not — die — in this house!" Then assisted by his friends he tried to walk, but suddenly he tottered and cried out: "My wife! my children! pardon!" It was his supreme thought; another moment and he sank dead into the arms that supported him.

As if the gamblers were bent on obeying the dying man's advice they at once fled from the card-room. The news of what had just occurred put all the women to flight, and trains and dress-coats darted pell-mell down the grand staircase. It was a perfect rout, and people seemed all the more eager to get away as it was now whispered that D'Albigny had not conducted himself loyally in the duel.

The marquis remained with Nana in the card-room, gazing at the blood-stained, gold-strewn carpet. Four servants were whispering in a corner; while Luc, as grave and as correct in attitude as usual, awaited his mistress's last orders in the hall. But Nana went to her bedroom by way of the smoking-room, leaning on the arm of the marquis who was smiling ominously. Thus left to his own devices, Luc laughed drily and muttered: "It seems that I'm not the only thief and murderer here." Then entering the card-room he knelt down on the carpet and began to pick up the blood-stained gold. The last silk trains and the last dress-coats were disappearing down the front steps. Mulhausen had gone off even before Stog expired.

Luc went up to his attic by the servants' staircase, and on peering out of his casement, he looked for Nana's lighted win-

dow and saw her shadow and D'Albigny's on the curtain. Then, stretching his wiry arm out into the night, he muttered, "Won't one of those two beings eat up the other one! Won't that marquis do for that woman! Won't that woman poison that man! If I don't see that before I die, I shall say that there is no Providence! And no one up there will contradict me." And so saying, he waved his arm to the starlit sky above him.

CHAPTER XXI.

About that time, Andrée recruited one of her former companions at Pallardins. She had gone with her parents and Lucien for a stroll in the Parc Monteeau, and they sat down to rest close to the sheet of ornamental water. The sun was sinking behind the lofty mansions which overlook the park. Between the lofty branches of the plane and chestnut trees a golden gleam darted over the lawns where the watering-hoses, stretched out like so many black serpents, sent up their spray, which fell again diamond-like onto the closely-mowed grass. Oblique shadows fell from the leafy branches, where pigeons were cooing lovingly; and as the rays of the sunset dwindled into streaks amid the growing shadows, women began to roam along the less-frequented pathways. Some girls, thickly veiled, walked up and down awaiting a tardy lover, while on the green benches and the yellow chairs hidden amid embowering foliage, one could hear low whispers, stifled laughter, and kisses given and returned.

Night was coming on. The last gleams faded from the tips of the branches. The whistling blackbirds ceased their carol. The bats were already fluttering about; one could distinguish the rustle of their wings, and follow their flight when darting from under the overhanging trees they appeared in relief against the sky. A young woman with an undulating tread passed several times up and down the pathway where the Naviels were seated. She wore a thick green veil so that they could not distinguish her features; but whenever she passed in front of Andrée she looked at her, her feet seemed to hesitate, and then suddenly she walked on again at a swifter pace.

Lucien was the first to remark this peculiarity. "It is strange," he said to Andrée, "but one could fancy that this woman wanted to speak to you and didn't dare to."

"Yes," replied Madamoiselle Naviel, "it is certainly singular. If she returns, ask her what she wishes."

Ten minutes or so elapsed before she appeared again. The lamps at the principal entrance had just been lighted, when Lucien recognized her returning by the opposite direction to

that in which she had disappeared. "Here she comes," said he; "if she looks at you again, I'll call her."

This time the stranger directed her steps in such a manner that her dress brushed against the bench on which the Naviels were seated. "Do you wish to speak to us, madame?" asked Lucien in a low tone, for he was by no means sure of the woman's intentions.

But she at once stopped short and answered in a stifled voice: "Yes, sir."

"What do you desire, pray?" asked Andrée.

"To thank you for having defended such an unfortunate woman as myself on the day of the review."

"What! is it you, Margot?" cried Andrée. "Good heavens! What an abominable situation you have fallen to, my poor girl."

"I have only what I deserve, madamoiselle; nobody would employ me at honest work, nowadays."

"Have you really looked for work?"

"Yes, madamoiselle; but when people knew what I was they turned me out at once — and then Jules, who was Paillardin's servant you know, and whom I live with now, wouldn't let me work; he said I didn't earn enough. I have to feed him all the same, for he won't do anything, and you can easily guess what I have to do. And when I don't take him home enough coin he goes for me! Ah! Madamoiselle Andrée, I assure you I've had quite enough of that life. One of these evenings, instead of going back to the lodgings, I shall jump off the railway bridge when a train is coming, and then there'll be no more Margot! And if I only had Jules to deal with, but no, there's the morality police as well, and whenever they can catch me they keep me all night in the lock-up, and threaten to send me to the Dépôt; they sent me there you know on the day of the review."

"Why was that?"

"Because I spoke to a young man in the Bois; but one of the four agents had me released at last."

"The tall one?"

"Oh, no, madamoiselle. He doesn't care for girls like us, but there are others who let us be, providing — but you've no idea of it, Madamoiselle Andrée. It's abominable!"

"Would you like to try and live honestly again, Margot?"

"Would I like? I should think I would, but then I'm afraid of myself."

"Listen to me, Margot, will you make a real try?"

"Yes, willingly, madamoiselle."

"You shall live with us and take your meals in the house. You mustn't go out again for some little time."

"Oh! how happy I should be! But suppose Jules came to take me away from you by force?"

"He has no right to enter our rooms," replied Andrée.

"But you forget," added Lucien, that she must fetch her clothes from the lodging-house; so she must go there again."

"I should never dare to do that, sir. Jules would kill me. And, besides, I've no money to pay the rent."

"How much do you owe?"

"Five francs for to-morrow. I pay in advance every day. Lodging-house keepers are like lice, they live on human filthiness and misery."

"Well, we'll advance you the five francs on your first month's salary."

"But Jules will give me a drubbing if I go alone."

"We'll go with you," replied Naviel, "that is, excepting my wife and daughter."

"Yes," observed Lucien; "it isn't the place for two honest women ——"

"I shall go," said Andrée, "who can question my conduct? No one. You will be there to protect me if needs be, and my father will be there as well. Come, Lucien, help me to do this good action. Help me to try and save this poor girl!"

Margot had fallen sobbing at Andrée's feet, and in a husky voice, she stammered: "Oh! thank you, mademoiselle, thank you; you don't know what I would do for you — I was bad and wicked — one often acts wrongly without knowing it. How shall I ever repay you all I owe you! Come, mademoiselle, come quickly; you see how I long to finish with this horrible life. It is enough to give one nausea — but, then, when every one spurns you, and kicks you into the gutter, you finish by lying there. And what can a poor girl do against society? She drinks to forget — brandy, absinthe — she gets accustomed to everything, she burns her body and becomes brutified, and then it's all, all over."

"Follow us, Margot," said Andrée, rising; "where do you live?"

"In the Rue de Levis."

The whole family started off, Lucien giving his arm to his betrothed. The human shadows were now fading away in the general dimness. Betwixt the lower branches of the lofty trees, and the garden walls fringing the horizon westward, one could discern but one dwindling ochre-tinted streak, the last memento of the sunset. Overhead, the sky was studded with silver stars, scattered at random as it were throughout the vast immensity of space, just as a gardener scatters flowering grain. The Naviels left the park and followed the outer boulevards toward the Rue de Levis where Margot's lodging was situated. Half way down the street the girl stopped short before a narrow

doorway. A paved passage, with an open drain full of sloppy water, led into a court-yard, in one corner of which an outer stair-case of worm-eaten wood conducted to the upper floor of a tumble-down tenement.

"We mustn't go up all together," said Margot to the Naviels. "The stair-case would never bear such a weight."

"But are you not afraid to go up alone?" asked Andrée.

"I'm afraid I shall get my licking," answered Margot, in an undertone.

"In that case we will go up with you," resumed Andrée.

"Let me pass," said Naviel, and he began to climb the stairs with Lucien and Margot.

Madame Naviel and Andrée followed them. A fetid stench arose from the muddy court-yard. The rear building in which Margot rented a room had only one upper story, but that overlooking the street had five. Articulated pipes climbed up the cracked walls with junctions at each fresh floor, and open drains in front of all the staircase windows, so that the tenants of each flat might rid themselves expeditiously of their slops. A factory chimney, which was flaring like a monster taper some distance off, cast a ruddy glow over the loftier house, on the wall of which the shadow of the smaller building rose but a few feet high. Here and there the dark ruddiness of the wall was pierced by the yellow glare of lighted windows, and, below, three ladders of different lengths hung vertically from iron hooks. On the ground floor there was a store place for hand-barrows, which were let out by the hour to the coster-mongers of the neighborhood. The staircase which Margot had climbed led to an outer gallery, the planks of which trembled threateningly under one's feet. It extended along the building and was the only approach to a number of furnished rooms, separated from each other by flimsy partitions and tenanted, almost exclusively, by women of Margot's class. Her room was the last one, at the very end of the gallery, and as she approached it she saw that the glass door was not lighted up.

"There can be no one in there," remarked Andrée, "for everything is quite dark."

"Oh! he's perhaps in bed," stammered Margot; and, after a moment's hesitation, she opened the door and went in.

CHAPTER XXII.

A couple of minutes elapsed while Margot was looking for some matches. She groped her way about the room trembling with fear, for Jules might be in bed asleep. As she continued feeling on the chest of drawers, her sleeve brushed against a clay pipe, which fell on the tiled floor and was shattered.

"That's a nice beginning," she muttered; "I'm in a fine pickle now."

At last, however, she discovered a couple of matches at the bottom of an old soap-box, and a bit of candle which remained in a copper candlestick. She took them out onto the gallery and lighted the candle there. The whole party then entered the den, at the further end of which there was an iron bedstead, with its dirty sheets and counterpane in disorder. On the well-worn tiles beside it, a red, mud-stained rug was stretched; while on the mantle-shelf, adorned with a looking-glass covered with fly spots, there stood a bottle of brandy — still half full — and a large glass but recently drained. A wash-basin and a zinc pitcher could be seen on the chest of drawers, made of common deal, and a woman's trunk encumbered the floor in front of the fire-place. Near the foot of the bed a door conducted to a small closet, lighted by a pane of glass fixed in the partition, and where several soiled skirts and petticoats were hanging from rusty nails. Margot approached this door and looked into the closet, on the floor of which lay a mattress covered by a brown rug. It was here that Jules slept whenever circumstances required it. He was not there, however, for the time being, but the hole smelled strongly of toilette vinegar and common pomatum.

"We must make haste," said Margot. "Fortunately Jules isn't there."

She bundled all the skirts and petticoats into the trunk, and took three shifts, four towels, and as many handkerchiefs out of one of the drawers. Then from another drawer she took a tooth-brush, a fan, a comb and a pair of gloves, which she laid pell-mell in the corner of the trunk. She fastened the latter by means of a little padlock, the key of which she placed in her pocket. "Now let us start," she said.

"One word," remarked Naviel. "Is the room in your name?"

"I don't understand you."

"Do you pay the rent of it?"

"Of course I do, as Jules never works. Good Heavens! what will he think of me when he finds that I've gone off! But wait a moment. I must ask the concierge to send me her son to carry my box. Is it far off where you live, Mademoiselle Andrée?"

"No; on the Square des Batignolles."

"If you need any one," exclaimed a masculine voice outside, "I'm present."

"Good Lord! it's Jules!" muttered Margot, turning very pale.

The man who had spoken now showed himself on the threshold. He wore a pair of white linen trousers secured by a

blue flannel sash, a linen jacket, a clean shirt, and no waistcoat. Around his neck a blue silk scarf was knotted with studied negligence. A blue cap was perched jauntily on his head, and his feet were incased in scarlet slippers. His once abundant whiskers were now cropped very short. He slowly entered the room with his hands in his pockets, and went straight toward Margot.

"I told you before," he said, "that if ever you wanted to go back to the Préfecture of Police, where I took the trouble to go and claim you, I would carry your trunk there myself. In the contrary case it must remain here.

"It belongs to me, like everything inside it.".

"Nothing belongs to you, my girl—do you hear me; not even your own carcass. When I went to the préfecture I stood guarantee for you, and it was, thanks to me, that you were released. You can't get out of it. You are my property, and if any one tried to take you away, without my consent it would just be like stealing a farmer's cow."

"It seems to me," objected Pierre Naviel, "that Margot is free to choose between the disgusting life which she leads with you, and the honest existence which we have offered her."

"She isn't free, as she has agreed always to remain with me," replied Jules.

"That's a joke!"

"I will precious soon show her if it's a joke; let her just try to go off."

"I don't think you would venture to strike her in our presence," remarked Naviel.

"It isn't your wife or your daughter, or that big gawky there, who'd prevent me!" retorted Jules.

"I shan't need any one's help to prevent you, my fine fellow. Just keep still."

"By Jove! we'll see about that. And to begin with, you are in my room all of you—do you hear?"

"Excuse me," interrupted Lucien, "we are in this girl's room. It is in her name."

"That's false."

"She declared it herself."

"She lied."

"But doesn't she pay the rent?"

"Of course she does."

"Well, then."

"So you don't believe me! Wait a bit. I'll call the concierge." And going out on to the gallery, Jules bawled, "Hi! come up here a minute, Madame Grappinet."

"Coming, coming, Monsieur Jules," replied a croaking voice from the depths of the court-yard.

A moment afterward the stair-case could be heard creaking

and groaning under a heavy weight, and suddenly a fat woman appeared. It was Madame Grappinet, clad in a black skirt covered with stains, and a black cape, greasy in front, ragged behind, and shiny everywhere. A cap which had once been white was set upon her head, with its strings, which looked as if they had been dipped in coffee, hanging down over her shoulders. Her fat, puffy cheeks almost concealed her little eyes from view. Her scanty hair, of the shade known as pepper-and-salt, furnished a couple of little curls, one in front of either ear. Her upper lip boasted a truly masculine mustache, and her chin was ornamented with a wart, from which three curly hairs were sprouting. The nails of her short, fat fingers were black with the snuff which she was continually stuffing into her open nostrils.

"Well, what's the matter now, my boy?" she asked of Paillardin's ex-servant.

"The matter? Why, that these folks want to take Margot's clothes away."

"Without warning me or paying me! That's a joke."

"Whose duty is it to pay you, madame?" asked Lucien.

"Why, Monsieur Jules, of course."

"Well, Monsieur Jules has the coin in his pocket," sneered the bully, with triumphal insolence. "But he doesn't intend to fork it out, so the clothes can't be taken away."

"They will be taken all the same, my lad," rejoined Pierre Naviel, in a rough voice.

"Ah! and how will you manage that?"

"Yes, how will you manage it?" grunted Madame Grappinet, derisively.

"By paying you, madame."

"As I ought to have eight days' notice, that will make forty francs, at five francs a day."

"Excuse me, madame," observed Lucien, "but is this room let by the week or by the night?"

"By the week, sir."

"It's false!" cried Margot, indignantly. "I've my last receipt, and here it is."

Jules darted forward so as to snatch the paper from her, but Pierre Naviel caught him by the arm and forced him back. Andrée then took hold of the receipt. "It is for five francs," she said, "and it is dated yesterday; here are your five francs, madame."

"I don't accept them. The box shan't leave," cried the old virago.

"Nor the woman either," growled Jules.

"In the meanwhile you'll leave," exclaimed Lucien.

"Eh, what? I leave?" said the ex-valet. "By what right do you turn me out?"

"It's simple enough. This room is let by the night, and paid for in advance. Well, as no one has paid for it, it isn't let. Now, I'll take it, and here are five francs, madame."

Madame Grappinet pocketed the crown-piece that was offered to her. "It's quite true," she said to Jules, "you can't prevent me from letting my room."

"But I've rented it for ever so long."

"Yes, but you pay me with Madame Margot's money, and as she won't stay with you any longer; well, you understand ——"

"At all events, I've enough coin to pay you for to-night. Here are five francs."

"Excuse me," rejoined Lucien, "I engaged the room before you; and besides, as I wish to have it I'll pay double rent. Here are another five francs, madame."

This time Madame Grappinet abandoned Jules for good. "Come, my lad, look for another lodging elsewhere," said she, pushing back the money which he still held out to her.

"So it's like that? Well, I'll turn you all out," cried Jules. "Off you go, or else I'll bleed you." And drawing a dagger-knife from his sash, he swiftly opened it.

Madame Grappinet rolled down the staircase shouting, "Fire! Murder! Police!" But Pierre Naviel stepped bravely toward the ex-valet. The latter was on the point of springing upon him, knife in hand, when a sound of voices was heard in the passage communicating with the street.

"Here's the police!" cried Margot. "I recognize their voices!"

The staircase and the gallery creaked anew, and a moment later there appeared two policemen, who had been passing the house when Madame Grappinet called for help. "Ah! so you are making a row again?" cried one of the agents, looking at Margot.

"No, no; it wasn't I," she stammered. "It's Jules, who wants to prevent me from working for my living."

"That's true," chimed in Madame Grappinet, who had followed the policemen up-stairs. "The room is paid for, and Monsieur Jules won't go off. In fact, he threatened to bleed these gentlemen."

"You old beast," grumbled Jules.

"Pray explain what brought you here, sir," said one of the agents, turning to Pierre Naviel.

The latter briefly stated the facts, and the policeman took some notes to assist him in drawing up his report. He asked for the names and addresses of every one present, and then remarked: "There has been a disturbance in this house. For to-night we shall take this girl to the lock-up. If you come to claim her to-morrow morning, the commissary will decide

whether he ought to hand her over to you or not. If not, she will be sent to the préfecture, and afterward to the prison of St. Lazare, for there must be a stop to all these goings on."

Margot wished to protest, but Naviel intervened. "Don't resist," he said. "However unjust the law may seem, it must be obeyed. I will go to fetch you to-morrow, and to-night I'll take your things home."

Having pushed Jules out of the house, in spite of his appeals and his oaths, the policemen then went off with Margot, who had resigned herself. She had to pay the penalty of vice once more, but a gleam of honesty beamed in the depths of her soul; a courageous hope was awakened in her mind, a hope of rising from the brutish torpor of her degradation by work which purifies.

On the morrow, M. Naviel went to claim Margot at the commissary's, and took her home with him.

CHAPTER XXIII.

NANA had just finished dressing. She was going to the opera to hear Faure in *Don Giovanni*. D'Albigny stood waiting for her, already gloved, and gazing with the air of a connoisseur at the head-dress of black pearls which she wore in her tawny hair. Virginie had been given her evening, and had already gone up into her own room.

"Oh! oh Nana!" suddenly exclaimed the marquis, bursting into sardonic laughter, "what do I see there? A bad sign, verily, a very bad sign."

She looked him full in the face and asked impatiently: "Pray what is the matter now?"

"The beginning of the end, my dear."

She turned pale.

"Yes; a silver hair among the gold, Nana."

"Pooh! It's yourself who are growing old, marquis. Your sight is failing you."

Instead of replying by words he leant toward her, and plucked as delicately as possible one of the wavy hairs which cast a light shadow over the nape of her neck. Holding it between his thumb and forefinger he presented it to her view.

"All the same it's true," she said. "Ah, marquis, we must make hay while the sun shines."

"We must increase in skill; and it is especially necessary that you should not show any weakness for any one."

"I? Why since you know me I have only had one momentary weakness — but that was long ago! Still, I should like to know the name of the happy mortal you seem to allude to?"

"Stog."

"I was never his mistress?"

"So much the better for you, so much the better, Nana. What would you have got out of Stog? You are not the woman for needy functionaries. Those birds haven't enough feathers to pluck."

"Bah! it was a mere caprice which wouldn't have lasted long."

"When you were only twenty, fancies were quite allowable; but now we must make no more mistakes. Be implacable and terrible. I am your ally for life but on one condition, you must be my instrument, an instrument of ruin for idiots, of flaggellation for human folly. I did not join you and drag my title in the mire for the pleasure of standing by and witnessing some latter day idyll. You must be of some use to me, as I was of use to you. Come, I ask you again, what could you have done with Stog? Did you intend to ask for a situation as postmistress, as a reward for your services? I should liked to see you discharging your duties! Really, Nana, Stog would have been a munificent protector, and I'm afraid you've wrecked your bark."

"He would have been an instrument of influence for me. I should have disposed of thirty thousand situations for my lovers' creatures. Have you as much to offer me, D'Albigny? Are you not more dependent on me than I on you? Come, which of us two ought to despise the other, the harlot or her paid bully?"

"Bravo! Nana! bravo! That's how I like to see you. Wit! wit! nothing but wit and repartee! It's lucky that you are well provided in that respect. It is only young women that have a right to be stupid."

"Do you think that I'm going to trouble myself about a single white hair? If I need any money I can mortgage my house and still live my old life. And when bad times and old age seem coming I shan't wait for them. So much the worse for my creditors! I shall set fire to everything — to my furniture, my jewels, my horses, my house and myself, which is worth more than all the rest together. And I'll do it in the midst of a fête which all Paris shall talk about. What do you think of that plan? Have I anything to fear?"

"Nothing, nothing, my dear. Only, are you not of opinion that it is as well to postpone the conflagration as long as possible?"

"No doubt."

"Well, then, listen to me. Your house, as I told you before, is worth a couple of million francs. Your pictures, your jewelry, your works of art and your furniture represent another four, that is a sleeping capital of six millions. Your money invested in securities amounts to hardly two millions, that is to say, it

represents a hundred thousand francs a year; now that income is barely sufficient to defray the expenses of your servants, your stables, and your — marquis. And nothing remains for your table, your toilet, etc.; nothing, absolutely nothing. So it is absolutely necessary for you to increase your income, unless you care to sell a portion of your property. At the present moment, however, there are two sources by which you might obtain fresh funds without parting with a single object that you possess. There is an immediate resource in the person of that rajah whom you turned out of the house on the night of your fête; and why pray? He is madly in love with you; no doubt he is extremely jealous of me, and yet all the same I strongly advise you to patch up a reconciliation."

"And the other resource, what is that?"

"You must begin by separating your daughter from that young fellow who wants to marry her. He would be in our way. He's honest, he's in love, and he would want to keep his wife to himself. When you say the word it shall be done. The Marquis d'Albigny will charge himself with launching Nana the Second into the world just as he launched Nana the First! You can certainly found a dynasty if you choose. The power of many adventurers, who never equaled you, has become hereditary. Well, I will be the herald of your presumptive heiress. I will proclaim Nana the Second and every one will acclaim her!"

"And cry out 'The queen is dead, long live the queen!' Thanks, my dear fellow, I'm not quite ready for the grave. I am still a beauty and still the queen."

"Yes, the queen-mother."

A flush of anger rose to Nana's cheeks; with her violent nature she was incensed by D'Albigny's cold raillery. "Leave this house, marquis, be off?" she cried in a biting voice; be off, or I will dismiss you like a varlet."

"In that case you ought to give me eight days' warning," retorted the marquis, who with his cold temperament remained the master in irony.

The storm called forth by Nana's wounded pride, subsided in presence of the calmness displayed by this unblushing *blasé*. "You are really stronger than I am," she said. "I will do as you wish."

"It is in your interest to do so, Nana. Take Andrée with you. Her beauty will attract fresh moths to your fêtes and we will relieve them of their wings. By the way, I met your rajah in the Bois de Boulogne to-day. There will never be another Nana than you for *him*. He was driving round the lakes in an open carriage and seemed to be very unwell. His cheeks were hollow and his eyes sunken. To be brief I approached him——"

"You! But he wants to kill you, marquis!"

"Really! What nonsense! Can any one kill me? But come, you will never guess what he asked me."

"No; but tell me."

"Well, he wanted to know if you were dead."

"Really? He's a queer fish that rajah and no mistake."

"For that reason I invited him to sup with you this evening after the performance."

"And you did quite right, D'Albigny. It seems he has a new costume sewn all over with pearls."

"You can unsew them, then. Offer him your house, pretend to share everything with him, so that he may share everything with you."

At this moment Luc knocked at the door to announce that the brougham was waiting in the court-yard. "Shall we start, dear?" asked the marquis, offering his arm to Nana.

"See that supper is ready at midnight," said she to Luc; and turning to the marquis; "shall you come back with us, D'Albigny."

"Not this evening. I will escort you to your box, where the rajah will certainly soon join you, and then I shall go to the club where I intend to stop all night."

"Then you need only lay two covers," resumed Nana, speaking to the footman.

Luc bowed respectfully, and the marquis and the courtesan disappeared behind the doorhanging.

The sun had just sunk in the west, in the rear of the Arc de Triomphe, and the red train of daylight's robe stretched across the horizon. The boulevards were being lighted up, and rows of customers sat at the little tables outside the cafés. Nana's brougham skirted the Madeleine and then made straight for the Place de l'Opéra. Since the piebalds had come to grief the courtesan contented herself with a pair of bays. She now only kept one coachman and one footman. She seemed bent upon economical reform. In fact D'Albigny had explained to her that without more money it was quite impossible to continue living on the old footing. So Nana had decided to settle down, at least for the time being. And yet the spectacle of Paris in the twilight, with its feverish overflowing life, was well calculated to prompt folly and extravagance. The boulevard has turned many a brain with its gay debauchery and facile pleasures; and the sight it presents at eventide may well strike an unhealthy imagination. Women are fluttering like moths in the luminous semi-circles described on the asphalt by the lights of the cafés, where steaming coffee in tall glasses mingles its white vapor with the blue smoke of cigars; freshly-shaved, curly-headed waiters, whose loins are girded with snowy aprons, pass with supreme dexterity among the little tables, balancing trays laden with glasses of beer upon three fingers; witticisms fly

around, talent nobnobs with venal beauty, at every three paces a celebrity is met; and silver-mounted carriage lamps dart by like shooting stars, while cabs and omnibuses file along in a continuous stream mingling with cozy broughams, which offer a propitious refuge for lovers anxious to conceal themselves.

When Nana's carriage drew up in front of the opera house, she alighted, took the marquis' arm and mounted the steps in silence. They were met by the rajah in the first vestibule. "Here is your slave," the Hindu said to Nana.

"Freed," she added.

"He asks for his chain again."

"In the hope of revolting and commanding in his turn?"

"In the hope of linking the queen of his heart to his own fate."

On reaching the box Nana released D'Albigny, who whispered to her, "I leave you to that fool's madrigals. Until to-morrow." Then he bowed to the rajah who entered the box with Nana.

There was a splendid "house." The whole of worldly Paris was there in dress-coats and low-necked dresses. The great dames of society sat in their boxes; aristocrats, artists, and fast-livers crowded the stalls. The admiring glances of the men called forth the beaming smiles of the women, over whose bare, satin-like shoulders the brilliant light was streaming — playing amid the down on their necks and the wavy curls of their back hair. And each silky capillary adornment was shot with changing reflections; here, too, a camellia peered forth from some shadowy corner behind a shell-pink ear, whilst above the luminous unwrinkled brows of society's queens rose fluttering aigrettes scintillating with brilliants and curved diadems of milky pearls. Warm perfumes mounted on high, the scent of woman wafted through the golden radiance mingled with the aroma of flowers. The whole cupola was filled with the buzz of conversation, and now and then a peal of girlish laughter resounded like the appogiato of a flute.

At last the conductor raised his ivory bâton and the overture burst forth. The Hindu was seated near Nana, so near that their knees touched, and behind the velvet edge of the box he clasped her hand with his trembling fingers. He did not listen to the first act of *Don Giovanni;* he did not behold the splendor of the house. This temple of melody vanished from his sight; he heard neither the orchestra nor the vocalists, he was wrapped up in his mad passion, and as he held Nana's hands, as his knee touched hers, as she returned his smile and his longing glances, he quite forgot that he had ever thought of poisoning her.

But Luc had not forgotten it; and at that same hour he climbed up to his attic to fetch the pill which the rajah had

given him. "I can have no heart left," he muttered, "since she still lives and still deceives! This cursed passion robs me of all my courage. And yet there must be an end to it. This night or never."

CHAPTER XXIV.

"THEN we shall sup together, alone?" asked the Hindu, when the curtain fell at the close of the first act.

"Yes, quite alone, prince."

"And you will never dismiss the slave who nearly died for loss of you?"

"No, I wish him to love me always."

"If you deign to love me, Nana, my life will be like paradise, and your eyes will be my stars. Love is the light of the soul, the heat of the blood; it warms and illuminates. When I gaze upon you in the full radiance, it seems to me as if my eyes had power to penetrate your being like a force of Nature, and form part of your life. Ah! your men of the West do not know how to love; no ardent words have ever scorched their lips like flames rising from the heart; they are enervated in a moment, and the source of their kisses is tarried. But we, the children of the sun, we feel infinite passion born in our souls, passion ever awakened and never satisfied. Our caresses are never less warm, our desires are never quieted — what are the love songs that they sing here? What is all this harmony that appeals to the ear, but which the heart fails to understand? Your poetry and your music are as pale and as cold as the skies. Your poets are nothing compared to ours. For twenty thousand years we have repeated the words of love which they wrote with their blood in books ——"

"Come, prince, let us talk reason; if I become yours, you must do as I do and sacrifice everything — I admit of no divisions, and I give you the right to refuse any. My house is yours ——"

"And D'Albigny, Nana?"

"I dismiss him!"

"What! you are willing that I should live with you and be your confidant of every hour?"

"I wish to live with you and your love; I wish to have everything in common with you — my house, my servants, my horses, all are yours — And I will be wholly yours as well, my lord and prince."

"And I will bring you my diamonds! A Jew offered me six millions for them, but I believe they are worth much more."

"What need have we of diamonds? We will sell all that."

"Yes; shall we? We will sell everything, and you shall come to Hindustan with me. You will see my country, the land of tigers; you will have a large palace full of slaves; you will have elephants to carry you, and armed men to guard you — come, will you?"

"Later, friend, perhaps. But the women of France can only live in their own land."

"Ah! you prefer your country to me, Nana. And yet I sacrificed everything to the happiness of seeing you once more, of gazing into your soul through your eyes, of pouring my kisses onto your heart by the chalice of your lips. You see it, Nana; you do not know how to love like the tiger-killer! I sacrifice everything to you, but you sacrifice nothing."

"You dare to say that, rajah, when to please you I am ready to turn the most faithful friend I ever had out of my house! You will never do what D'Albigny has done for me, never, never. And yet I sacrifice him to you! I abandon him to chance, to ruin, to death; for he ruined himself for Nana, and that is a thing which you would never do."

"He gave you his gold, and you gave him your love. Your gift has lasted longer than his. You have done even more for him; you have fed and lodged him for twenty years! And so for the little you owe to him, he owes you both love and life!"

"I tell you, rajah, that he has ruined himself; and for D'Albigny, ruin means death."

"Well, I will do the same as he has done. I will ruin myself for you. I will bring all my treasures of the East into your house; but if ever you drive me from it I shall kill you!"

"Prince, it is defying a woman of France to threaten her; and when she is defied she braves everything."

The rajah made no rejoinder. The curtain had risen again for the second act; and at the end of the third one they left the opera house. It was half-past eleven when they reached Nana's residence. Luc was awaiting them in the hall; and it was he who opened the large glass door communicating with the park. A moon ray glided through the stained glass, lighting up the alabaster nymphs which were disposed amid full-foliaged caladiums springing sheaf-like from large Japanese vases, and standing out in shadowy masses against the white-marble walls. Nana let her train drop, and with the customary undulation of her hips she mounted the steps amid the rustling music of her blue silk skirt. The rajah assisted her in her ascent, with one arm passed round her waist. Luc followed, looking as grave as ever.

"Is supper served?" asked Nana, turning toward the servant.

"I had foreseen that madame might return before the appointed hour," replied Luc, "so everything is ready."

"Very good." And Nana threw him her mantle, her blue kid gloves and her lace fan. He was enveloped in the perfumed garment, which had draped itself in fantastic folds upon his angular form. He looked both grotesque and tragical, with his pale, clean-shaven, clown-like face lighted by piercing eyes. Nana turned round again, and with a burst of laughter she showed him to the rajah. Luc was unable to repress a gesture of revolt. "Have I become a clown again?" he grumbled.

The rajah saw and heard him, and while Nana entered the conservatory alone he drew near to Luc and whispered stealthily: "Give me back the poison."

"I no longer have it," said Luc, who had just hung Nana's mantle over the balustrade.

"You lie!"

"So be it."

"Give it to me and I will free you."

"I am not a slave, prince; the woman whom you condemned to death shall drink the poison which you gave me for her."

"I will kill you."

"It will be too late."

"Let her live, you shall be rich."

"I prefer to be revenged."

"I will denounce you, then, and she will drive you from the house."

"I shall say that you gave me this poison, which is not known in France; and she will have you thrown out into the street by her servants, as she once threatened to do."

"What are you saying to my valet?" asked Nana, who, astonished by this colloquy between Luc and the rajah, now showed her tawny head and large green eyes under the silken door-hanging.

"I will tell you that by-and-by," replied the rajah, and he took Nana by the hand to lead her into the dining-room. Luc followed a few steps behind.

The French windows looking on to the moon-lit park were wide open, and the delightful scent of orange-blossom and blushing roses were wafted into the apartment, where it mingled with the disturbing aroma rising in blue spirals from a perfume burner of pure gold. Two covers were laid on the table, each flanked by a decanter of Baccarat crystal filled with iced champagne, which cast a golden reflection upon the snowy cloth. A roast guinea-fowl lay on a silver dish near a *timbale* of *nouilles au parmesan;* and bunches of long oval Spanish grapes, of amber-like transparency, were piled upon the Sêvres dessert stands, marked with Nana's initial. A number of crawfish were ranged in a scarlet pyramid under the chandelier, the green tapers of which burned in large lilies of yellow crystal, upheld by silver cupids.

"Have you ever loved any one, Nana?" suddenly asked the rajah, when they were seated at the table in front of each other.

"Really loved, do you mean? Perhaps so — but real love is like a shame-faced beggar, it hides itself and blushes for itself. I loved a poor man once and even had a daughter by him ——"

"And what have you done with your daughter?"

"I sent her to the foundling hospital, as you can readily understand, and I had the father arrested."

"Why was that?"

"Because he had stolen some money from his employer for me."

"And why didn't you keep your child?"

"Because I had an old king for my lover at that time; and his majesty detested children. The marquis never liked them either."

Behind Nana's arm-chair, Luc, whose face was whiter than his cravat, stood impassible and erect in his black dress-coat. His ardent eyes alone revealed the storm raging in his heart.

"And so," resumed the rajah, "this man whom you had really loved and whom you denounced as a thief has not killed you — that is wonderful."

"Kill me? Ah! Ah! But people don't kill Nana, prince."

"That man must be a coward, then."

Luc was at that moment pouring some iced champagne into Nana's glass. The rajah, enervated by her smiles and glances, by the sparkling wine and intoxicating perfumes, rose from his seat and approached her, in a transport of passion. Leaning over her chair from behind he caught hold of her head with both hands and made her lean back. Then with one arm round her neck he stooped to kiss her, but as his lips drew near to her own she averted her face with a nervous laugh. Suddenly, however, the Hindu raised his head and roared aloud like a tiger in the jungles. He had just perceived on the mosaic pavement the gigantic shadow of a hand stretched over Nana's glass. With a terrible look at the valet, he sprang upon the goblet of champagne and threw it out into the park by one of the open windows. Then clasping Nana round the waist, he raised her from her chair, and darted into the boudoir, carrying her in his arms.

CHAPTER XXV.

ANDRÉE experienced a strange moral uneasiness after her visit to Nana's house. It seemed as if some evil germ had been suscitated in her nature by her interview with the courtesan, by

the opulent splendor of that palace of vice, where everything. from the nude statues to the paintings on the ceilings, from the luxurious couches to the strong perfumes of the exotic plants, appealed to evil instincts. With her innate tastefulness and truly artistic temperament, Andrée could but admire all that was beautiful, whatever its source, and for a moment in that fatal house she had been unable to guard against a feeling of envy for the life of gilded magnificence which Nana led. When Andrée, by dint of self-observation and silent reflections during her days of toil, discovered this impure fermentation in her mind, hitherto so calm and healthy, she judged herself with great severity. She doubted her own strength, and looked into the future with exaggerated, over-scrupulous timidity, as if afraid that she were unworthy of Lucien. So she become very sad, and Lucien perceived that she was suffering one evening when he spoke to her about their marriage.

Margot, whose conduct had been most praiseworthy since she had been snatched from the hotbed of vice and transplanted into pure soil, had just gone up to her attic. M. Naviel was smoking his pipe in the kitchen, and his wife was still busy in the work-room. So Andrée and Lucien remaining alone went out onto the little balcony of the parlor window to inhale the evening air. They remained there together, silent at first, amid the emanations rising off the moist foliage below them. The gardeners were watering the shrubbery in the square. And at times, during the lulls between the shouts of the children at play, one could hear the water discharged by the leather hose raining over the green leaves.

"What are you thinking of, Andrée?" asked Lucien, suddenly.

"Of you, my friend."

"Is that the reason why you have been so sad for the last few days?"

"I am not sad, I am serious."

"But I am growing impatient. What is the use of all this delay, all this postponement?"

"Hope is at the end of our troubles," rejoined Andrée with a sigh.

"Why are you sighing, Andrée? What! do you disguise doubt as hope? Do you lack faith in me?"

"Oh, no, Lucien!"

"In yourself, then?"

"Sometimes."

"You slander yourself, surely."

"No; I ask myself at times why I have certain bad thoughts and foolish ideas which nothing about me can have inspired. For instance, I often dream that I am very rich—very, very rich—like that woman Nana, with carriages, servants, and a

house full of works of art. And then in my troubled mind I plot out a little romance. I meet you one evening, as I am driving back from the Bois in an open carriage. You are on foot with your mother on your arm, and she is very tired and can scarcely walk. Then I tell my coachman to stop; I jump out, and propose to take you home in my carriage. You accept; we become acquainted; we love each other and marry, and your mother never goes about on foot again."

"I am very fond of my mother, Andrée, but I prefer that she should go about on foot. There are only two kinds of women who have horses and carriages — wealthy ladies and abandoned women. If you were a wealthy lady you wouldn't have anything to say to me, and if you were ——"

But he stopped short, aghast at the supposition which he had been on the point of enunciating.

"You mean," said Andrée, "that if I were an abandoned woman you couldn't have anything to do with me. And you would be quite right, Lucien. The man who gives his name to an abandoned woman sells himself. And yet, I believe that there are some men who live at these women's expense."

"Undoubtedly. That Nana, whose horses nearly killed you, and whom you did the honor of lunching with, keeps, I am told, a certain marquis ——"

"D'Albigny," interrupted Andrée, in a trembling voice, and with a flush on her cheeks.

"How does it happen that you know his name?"

"He was there when I went to her house."

"Then you lunched all three together?"

"Yes."

"You ought not to have submitted to that promiscuity. Such frequentations, however short they may be, invariably taint the mind. But, at least, I trust that this woman did not leave you alone with her marquis."

"On the contrary, she left us together for some time."

"Then I am certain that it was pre-arranged between them. Don't you know, Andrée, that these creatures are leagued together to ruin virtuous women, whom they hate and envy; and that they would all of them condone their lover's infidelity, if it had for result the degradation of some pure girl? What did that man say to you when you were alone with him?"

"He spoke of you."

"He ridiculed me, no doubt?"

"How can you imagine that, Lucien? I would never have allowed it."

"Then what did he say about me!"

"He said that you didn't dress well; and he posed as a model in comparison with you. I laughed at it, for, after all, I can't see that a man gains in dignity by serving as a doll for his tailor.

But all that was pure jealousy, for he is past middle age, and he envies your youth."

"But what else did he say?"

"He spoke of the affection with which you inspire me, and which I allowed him to see."

"Ah! he showed himself jealous of your affection; but hasn't he Nana's?"

"Don't let us compare, pray."

"I am almost certain that he made you some stupid declaration or cowardly proposal."

"Come, Lucien, let us talk of something else."

"No, Andrée; I can guess that something happened, something which you hide so as not to grieve me, or so as to prevent me from calling the scoundrel to account."

"Well, yes, it's true; he made me some insulting proposals. I called him a coward and came away; but I swear to you that he never touched me."

"I believe you; but I also believe that he tried to tear out my heart. And I will tear off his ears."

"Lucien! in heaven's name don't create a scandal. People would believe there was something else, and my reputation would be ruined."

"It would be ruined still more if every scoundrel, titled or untitled, were allowed to stain you with his dirty thoughts or disgusting proposals! Why did you not speak of this to your father? He would have flattened that marquis like a bug!"

"I have already done wrong to speak of it to you, Lucien. Promise me that you will keep it secret, and that you will leave that man alone."

"No, no; all Paris shall learn that the Marquis D'Albigny has been cuffed by a petty clerk, by the humble affianced lover of a flower-girl, whose life the scoundrel tried to ruin, and whose marriage he endeavored to break off. Yes, every one shall know it, and you will hear of it yourself."

Then just touching Andrée's forehead with his lips, he hurried from the house.

It was the morning after the supper with the rajah, and Nana was still in her bedroom when Virginie came to tell her that a young man had called to see M. D'Albigny, and had asked at what hour he would be sure to find him.

Nana had a presentiment that some fresh danger threatened the marquis, so she at once threw on a muslin dressing-gown, slipped her feet into a pair of Oriental slippers of red leather, embroidered with pearls, and hurried into the boudoir. She recognized Lucien Despretz at the first glance, and asked him familiarly, "Do you come from Andrée?"

"No, madame, I have come in spite of her, and it was not with you that I wished to speak."

"The marquis is probably at his club, sir, and I don't think you will be able to see him now. As a rule, when he has spent his night at the card-table he sleeps for a few hours on a sofa, and the club servants must certainly have orders not to let any one disturb him."

"When can I expect to find him here?"

"I really can't say. He has no fixed time for coming. I can never rely on him myself."

"That's a very good system to avoid troublesome explanations with the creditors who may hold him to account for their money or their honor."

"The marquis never avoids any one, sir, and those to whom he owes any money or any sword thursts will always find him. But it seems to me that it can't be question of one matter or the other with you?"

"I have no answer to give you, madame; I wish to deal with the marquis."

"But I must really insist upon knowing what you wish."

"I wish to ask him for an explanation."

"About what, if you please?"

"I repeat, madame, that I have nothing to say to you."

"I am sure, however, that it must be about Mademoiselle Andrée Naviel. No doubt this foolish little thing has complained to you about the marquis' gallantry. But that is of no consequence. I assure you that D'Albigny is the same with every woman; and, really, it isn't worth while for you to court a sword thrust."

"I have not told you, madame, that I intended to challenge Monsieur D'Albigny. If I had to fight with him, I should endeavor to arrange matters so that our chances would be equal."

"But you are mad, my friend. D'Albigny doesn't fight with the first-comer; and I don't think he would ever do you the honor of fighting with you."

"The honor would be for him."

"You are not wanting in cheek, young man; and you amuse me with your idea of a duel. If you have seriously come here to propose an encounter with the first swordsman of France, it can only be in view of rendering D'Albigny ridiculous, supposing he accepted the challenge. But you may be reassured on that score. If you saw him, the only result would be that he would have you kicked out of the house by his servants. So in your own interest I advise you to keep quiet and not to come back here. Believe me, spare your life for the sake of Andrée, reserve all this fine ardor for her."

"You can rail at me if you like, madame. But if the marquis had remained in his own circle he would have found plenty of abandoned women, titled and otherwise, whom his offer would

only have pleased. What need had he to descend to our sphere, where his proposals could only encounter disgust?"

"What do you know about that, sir——"

"You need not finish, madame. There is surely no occasion for you to make yourself odious."

"At least I never deceive any one. People know what I am, and I don't blush for it. The top of the walk belongs to us—to *us*, do you hear? We raise the standard of vice, and our luxury bespatters the virtuous women of your sphere. We know what they are, the women of the middle classes! Our lovers tell us all about them and amuse us by ridiculing them. And come, why, I myself, I know your Andrée better than you do, for D'Albigny gave me full particulars. You can marry her now if you choose. She is on a nice road. D'Albigny will tell you all about her physical perfections, if you wish for information."

"I have allowed you to go on to the end, madame, but I do not believe a word you say. You are wicked and perfidious, I see. You long to impart your own vices to those around you, as if you were some contagious disease. But in spite of your fine bravado, in spite of all your flaunting luxury, you feel atrocious hatred against the women who have a right to despise you—hatred which would eat up your heart, if you only had one."

"Excuse me, sir, but I now feel certain that if you insisted upon learning whether the marquis was here on not, it was so that you might be able to insult me with impunity. But wait a moment; I have not yet told you everything about your virtuous betrothed. When I have finished I will have you turned out of the house."

"Oh! you can summon your servants, you can assemble the army of your lovers, madame; not one of them, I am sure of it, however well paid or however vile he may be, would deny the truth of my words."

"They would all tell you that you did wrong to insult Nana, since you are bent upon marrying her daughter."

"Nana's daughter! Andrée? She is no more your daughter than she is your lover's mistress!"

"You wish for proofs? Well, here is one that you won't dispute. Read, sir, read! Ah! you compel me to bruise your heart. But read, my lad, I tell you." With these words she thrust perforce into his hand a letter which D'Albigny had given her a few days before. It was the answer to the marquis' request for information respecting Andrée. It had a printed heading—that of the Poor Relief Board—although it was a private communication, and emanated from one of D'Albigny's friends. Holding it with a trembling hand Lucien hastily perused it.

"My Dear Friend.—You ask me for some private informa-

tion respecting a child of the feminine sex who was left at the Foundling Hospital in the Rue d'Enfer, on the 14th August, 1860, in accordance with the instructions of the Commissary of Police of the Eighth Arrondissement. This child was handed over to M. Pierre Naviel, a mechanic, residing in the Rue Crozatier, on the 20th of the same month — that is, six days after it was left at the hospital by a servant girl called Virginie, in the name of the real mother, the woman Nana."

As Lucien read this note, the courtesan watched him with a cruel, feline look. She no doubt expected an outburst; but having finished his perusal he crumpled the paper in his fingers and flung it with a furious gesture on the floor.

"You see that I state nothing without proofs," exclaimed Nana in a strident voice; "and now, sir, if you marry Andrée you will at least owe some respect to myself, her mother!"

But Lucien Despretz did not hear these last words; he had fled, so as to hide his weakness from this woman, and without knowing what he did or where he went he hurried into the Parc Monteeau, turned down a deserted pathway and sank upon a bench, bursting into sobs. What! Andrée, that vision of pure loveliness first revealed to him one evening at the Bouffes, who had afterward haunted his imagination until she became part and parcel of his life and happiness — what! Andrée Naviel had no right to the name of honest woman? She was really the daughter of that odious creature? the blood of a prostitute flowed in her veins? That adorable girl, that darling Andrée, whose dear little feet he would have kissed — she, the object of his respectful worship bore within her a primogenial, fatal taint, the hereditary germ of vice?

He was tempted to doubt of her virtue, chastity and purity, of all that constituted the limpid, luminous charm and beauty of her soul and body. Had Nana told the truth? Had Andrée fallen into some abominable trap? had she been the victim of some plot planned by her own mother bent upon delivering her up to the marquis? She did not dare to confess the truth. And that, no doubt, was why she had seemed so sad during the last few days. The secret of her shame preyed upon her mind and paralyzed her will. No doubt she reproached herself for her silence, as if it were an act of treason toward the man she loved; but she feared that she might lose his affection if she revealed the truth. Still, if he questioned her she would no doubt tell him everything. And he was bent upon knowing all, even if the horrible certainty poisoned each day of his after life. Implacable toward himself, full of a bitter longing for enlightenment, he raised his brow; and as his ardent anguish dried the first tears of love upon his cheeks, he walked hastily out of the park and turned down the Rue Legendre, toward the Square des Batignolles. On the way he entered a tobacconist's shop to

buy a post card, and wrote to his employer stating that he was unwell and begged to be excused that day. Then, having slipped the card into a letter-box, he hurried off toward the Naviel's home.

CHAPTER XXVI.

ANDRÉE Navie was in the work-room when Lucien Despretz arrived. She rose up in surprise on seeing him, for at that hour he ought to have been at his employer's. But on looking at him more attentively, she saw that he was very pale. "What is the matter, Lucien?" she asked, anxiously.

"I don't know," he replied; "give me time to think." And taking up a bit of wire which was lying on the table, he feverishly began to twist it round his forefinger. Margot raised her artful little face, and gave Lucien a keen look with her black eyes: "I'm afraid there's some trouble in store for Mademoiselle Andrée," she whispered to a work-girl beside her.

Andrée was mounting a rose; and the slight wire stalk glided between her fingers as she wound the green paper covering in spirals around it. She was sitting with her back to the window, through which the morning sun streamed into the room, casting as it were an aureole about her head. The little locks of fine hair rising in tangled curls above the nape of her neck sparkled like tawny gold, and under her long lashes her big green eyes displayed their candid depths. Her thumb and forefinger, the nails of which were tipped with carmine, moved rapidly to and fro, as she rolled the artificial stalks between them; and from time to time, somewhat coquettishly, her little fingers rose out of the shadow into the roseate transparency of the sunlight. Lucien watched her in silence. He succeeded at first in controlling the storm that was raging in his heart, and determined not to speak to her of her birth. The ties of relationship which united Andrée to Nana already occupied a secondary place in his thoughts. What he wished to know above and before everything else was the truth concerning her tête-à-tête with the Marquis D'Albigny. He had come with the intention of requesting a full explanation in that respect. For if Nana had furnished him the proof that Andrée was her daughter, she had merely indulged in slanderous insinuations respecting the interview with the marquis. And so it was to Andrée's own loyalty that he must now appeal. He did not doubt but what she would reply frankly to a direct question. He in no wise suspected the purity of her mind; all that he feared was her own imprudence, for he knew that she was possessed of a sort of natural bravery which would prevent her from shirking a sincere avowal. But at the

moment of provoking an explanation, on which his future happiness depended, he hesitated, seized as it were with mortal vertigo on the edge of this abyss of grief in which his whole life might perhaps be swallowed up. Andrée had been his first and only love; he felt that he should never be able to love again, and the emptiness of his dreary future appalled him. This anguish of heart became so apparent on his loyal face, that as Andrée raised her eyes to give him a loving look she felt frightened; and no wonder, for his lips were creased into an expression of bitter despair. Rising abruptly to her feet, and flinging her unfinished rose on the work-table, she approached him and said in an undertone: "You are hiding something from me, Lucien; what has happened between you and the marquis?"

Taking his betrothed by the hand, Lucien led her into the next room. "I have come to ask you, Andrée," he said, "what took place between the marquis and *you?*"

"What I told you, Lucien."

There was a pause. The young fellow was again seized with hesitation. If the accusations which Nana had launched against Andrée were false, if the marquis had failed in his attempts, the mere thought that he, Lucien, had doubted her, might provoke the young girl to indignant revolt. He knew that such a thought might drive her to despair and cause her to break off her engagement. And yet silence was no longer possible, now. Andrée's legitimate susceptibility was awakened, and giving Lucien a hard, straight, questioning glance which was unfamiliar to him, she exclaimed: "Speak! You have come here to tell me something. You have a question to ask of me; you wish to cross-examine me perhaps. By the tone in which you have spoken, I can guess that you have some doubt respecting me. Speak, Lucien, speak; you are a man — you have more courage than I have — speak, I tell you."

"Do you know what that woman said to me, Andrée?"

"Nothing pleasant, probably, for you or myself — and nothing true either. What truth could you expect from the lips of a woman who lies even in her love?"

"She insinuates two things — the first concerns you yourself, personally and exclusively, and at first it greatly impressed me; but on reflection I have decided that I ought not to let it preoccupy me. Of this first statement she furnishes a proof, which I have seen; but the other one cannot be proved — at least by her. Now I want you to tell me the truth on that second point."

"Question me clearly, Lucien; tell me what you wish to know, and I will answer you frankly."

"Then listen to me, Andrée, and try to understand me. The doubt that I wish to clear does not effect your honesty. Your

loyalty is unquestioned; but, may be, a fatality, an infamous trap in which you were caught——"

"No more! Ah! I understand now what you wish to ask me, Lucien! It is abominable — abominable! I should never have believed it of you."

Andrée's voice broke; and as her knees trembled under the frightful grief that had seized hold of her, she sank into an arm-chair, and hiding her face with her two little trembling hands, which were heated by sudden fever, she burst into stifled sobs. The two lovers were quite alone. Madame Naviel had gone out shortly before Lucien Despretz had arrived, and Andrée had taken care to close the doors so that the work-girls might hear nothing of the explanation. She had certainly never imagined that it would be such a terrible one. In full hope, she and Lucien found themselves plunged into despair. And as yet she did not know all the truth! She was still ignorant of the fact that she was a harlot's daughter.

Never had Lucien been so struck by the likeness between Andrée and Nana, as at the moment when the young girl gave him that harsh, bitter look as she requested him to explain himself. She had then strikingly reminded him of Nana, for there was the same gleam in her eyes that he had noticed in those of the courtesan when the latter descanted ironically upon the modesty of virtuous women. They were both of the same type of beauty, with the same roseate complexion, the same velvety skin, and the same charming little dimples, true nests for lovers' kisses. The healthy sphere in which Andrée had always lived might so far have preserved her from vicious tendencies, and have controlled the longings of an imperious temperament; but at the first efforts of a man, expert in seduction, may be, all the virtuous firmness, all the resisting chastity would have been conquered by the original taint of vice.

The attack of weakness which had made Andrée weep proved of short duration. She abruptly rose to her feet again, with dry eyes and a bitter smile. "And so, sir," she said, "you have come to this honest home to ask me — me, Andrée Naviel — if I am really the mistress of the Marquis d'Albigny!"

"You might have been dishonored without being seduced."

"And you dare to say that to me! And you think that if I had fallen victim to a plot, I should have allowed you to continue courting me! Then what opinion can you have of my sincerity? Ah! I really feel humiliated for you, for this proves that you do not know how to distinguish the truth from falsehood! And I feel sorry also for your loss, for you have lost the friendship — nay, the love — of a woman who would have made you happier than you will ever be, now! Ah! I pity you, sir — yes, I pity you; for to come and blast our affection, our hopes, to come and break off our marriage, and ruin all our

plans, all the dreams we ever made together, you surely must have very greatly suffered!"

"Yes, I have suffered, Andrée; I have suffered frightfully. Can you not see how I have wept since leaving that fatal house? All my courage has left me; I have become a child again."

"Ah! you have made me suffer also, sir. I should never have thought you so cruel!"

"Forgive me, Andrée! I no longer believe what that woman told me."

"But you did believe it, since it made you suffer."

"I do not believe it, I tell you."

"Ah! you have doubted me. Go — leave me! You are no longer my betrothed; never return here again! The sight of you is odious to me."

"But, Andrée, cannot you understand that the thought made me mad with despair? You do not realize what shame there was for you, what anguish for me, what desolation for both of us, in the words that fell from Nana's lips — 'Andrée the mistress of D'Albigny!'"

"Do not repeat that before me. You ought never to have spoken it. It was your duty to respect my imagination. Why do you come and repeat to me the infamous things which that woman told you? You ought to have buried them beneath your disdain. What have *I* in common with her?"

"Ah! you will know it only too soon."

"So you persist in placing me on the same line as that woman! You see that you still doubt; you see yourself, sir, that everything is irrevocably ended between us, and that we must part for ever!"

"But you do not understand me, Andrée."

"No, sir, we don't understand each other. Leave me, I tell you — leave me; the sight of you is killing me."

"Listen to me, Andrée ——"

"I have listened to you too long already, and I will listen no longer. Go off; do you really wish to kill me? Ah! my God, my God! what have I done to suffer like this!" As she spoke she began to wander about the room, wringing her hands so violently that the joints of her fingers cracked. Suddenly, however, she took up her mantle and threw it over her shoulders. Then she put on a bonnet, and feverishly tied the strings under her chin.

"Where are you going, Andrée?" asked Lucien.

"What does it matter to you?"

"I shall follow you."

"I forbid your doing so."

"I mean to know where you are going?"

"You wish to know it? Well, I am going where you went — to Nana's!"

He tried to stop her, but she pushed him aside with disdainful indignation, and hurried off, slamming the door in his face.

A liveried footman ushered Mademoiselle Naviel into the courtesan's boudoir. Nana was taking her bath; and the marquis was alone, stretched on a divan, and smoking a cigar. As Andrée perceived him she muttered a few words of apology, and drew back toward the door. But D'Albigny sprang to his feet. "Do I intimidate you, my pretty dove?" he asked.

"I will wait in the ante-room until Madame Nana is ready to receive me!" replied Mademoiselle Naviel.

"I cannot suffer that, mademoiselle." And drawing near to her, he took one of her tiny hands in his own, and compelled her to sit down on the divan. Andrée was very flushed and somewhat out of breath after her rapid walk. Her eyes were shining more brilliantly than usual, and D'Albigny was dazzled by her youthful beauty, which reminded him of Nana in her earlier days. He became caressing, almost tender. "You seem deeply moved, mademoiselle," he remarked. "May I be allowed to inquire the cause of your emotion?"

"The cause — is yourself."

"Myself? Pray explain yourself, pretty one. Am I privileged to ——"

"Do you know what my betrothed has just told me?"

"No; what can this fortunate young man have said to you?"

"That the people of this house try to pass me off as your mistress."

"I regret that he told you an untruth, mademoiselle; and I cannot imagine who could have invented such a story?"

"It was a person with whom you are very intimate."

"Nana? In that case it was the mere pastime of an idle woman. A mere joke, as she will readily acknowledge."

"She must really do so, sir, so as to undeceive the man who thought me capable of being false to him."

"Why undeceive him? Since he believes it, let him do so. False so far, the supposition might none the less come true in the future. Do you think, Andrée, that I have renounced you?"

"I am not a plaything for a man of your rank, sir, and I came here for something very different."

"I will confess that that matters little to me."

"It is Madame Nana that I came to see."

"She is at her toilet and can't see any one. She received your lover in my place, and I receive you in hers."

At this moment a discreet rap at the door was heard. "Come in," said the marquis.

The same servant who had ushered Andrée into the boudoir a few minutes previously, again raised the door curtain and handed D'Albigny a card. "Lucien Despretz," read the

marquis aloud. "I don't know any Lucien Despretz. Tell the person that I am not at home."

"Say that you are here, sir," exclaimed Andrée. "It is my betrothed who wishes to speak to you."

"Nothing is easier, little one." And, turning to the servant, D'Albigny drily added: "Tell the person to come in."

The footman raised the curtain, and Lucien walked straight toward the marquis, exclaiming in a threatening voice: "It seems, sir, that you pass yourself off as this young lady's favored lover."

"Excuse me, sir," said the marquis, "in what quality do you come here?"

"As a suitor to the hand of the young lady whom I surprise here in a tête-à-tête with you."

"Oh! you don't surprise any one," rejoined Andrée, "since it was I who requested the marquis to receive you. I am in no wise surprised that you should have followed me; and it is as well that everything should be cleared up between you, who doubt me, and this gentleman in whose name I am slandered."

"I don't think it will be my fault if the matter is not cleared up," rejoined D'Albigny, "nothing seems easier to me. So I begin by saying in this gentleman's presence that his betrothed is not my mistress, and you may believe me ——"

"I ask for nothing more," said Lucien.

"Oh! but *I* am not yet satisfied," continued the marquis, "you don't let me finish. I have said that Mademoiselle Andrée is not my mistress so far, but I add that she will be so."

"You insolent scoundrel!" cried Lucien, in a voice which vibrated with anger.

"Is Monsieur Lucien Despretz satisfied?" asked D'Albigny in a tone of raillery.

"Lucien Despretz despises you," replied Andrée's betrothed. "Come, mademoiselle, let us leave this house."

"Mademoiselle Andrée will not leave," rejoined the marquis, whose every word seemed full of defiance to Lucien; "as for you, sir, you now know what you wished to know. I advise you not to try my patience any longer. Go!"

"I shall not go alone, marquis."

"You will go as I choose and when I choose."

"Try to turn me out!"

"Oh! I shall not stain my hands with the perspiration on your cheeks. I have servants to turn you out," and, so saying, D'Albigny pulled the bell-rope.

The footman again reappeared. "Drive this intruder away," ordered the marquis.

"I see, sir, that you are an infamous scoundrel and an utter coward!" cried Lucien, raising his hand threateningly over D'Albigny's head.

"As many words as you like, my fine fellow, but I don't tolerate assaults." And catching hold of Lucien's fist before it had touched his face, the marquis gave the young fellow such a formidable blow full in the chest that he threw him fainting on the carpet beside Andrée, who could not repress a cry of indignation.

"Carry *that* away," said D'Albigny to the servant, at the same time pointing to the prostrate clerk.

The footman raised Lucien by the shoulders and dragged him out into the landing. Andrée wished to follow, but the marquis caught her by the arm and exclaimed imperiously: "Stay here!"

"I wish to leave."

"I mean you to stop."

"You have no right to order me about."

"But I have the right to do so," haughtily exclaimed Nana, who at that moment entered the boudoir draped in full-flowing Indian peplum.

"That's true, my dear," said the marquis, "so I will leave you alone with your daughter. You can teach her her duty toward yourself and toward me." With these ironical words D'Albigny crossed the room, raised the door-hanging and disappeared.

"In two words this is the situation," said Nana to Andrée, "I am your mother."

"You!"

"Yes, I! But don't interrupt me, Andrée. You are not of age. I have the right to take you back and I do so. That is all."

"You pretend that you are my mother."

"Yes."

"It is easy to say so."

"And easy to prove."

"How?"

"Read this letter?"

"I will read nothing and listen to nothing. I have no need of your proofs."

"You won't read it? Then I will do so!"

"Let me go, madame, let me go; I wish to see my lover since your marquis has murdered him on account of me."

"Your lover, do you say? Do you think I will give my consent to such a marriage? You have some strange illusions, little one," said Nana, jeeringly.

"This is an infamous comedy, madame, and you will have cause to repent of the manner in which you treat me."

"I shall not repent of saving you from misery and want, and later on, you yourself will realize how much you owe to me. Your brain is full of false ideas at present, but we will style you

properly, the marquis and I, you may be at ease on that point."

"There are laws, madame."

"Yes, against children under age who wish to leave the maternal roof to run after worthless fellows — needy clerks earning their fifteen hundred francs a year! A fine life and no mistake for the daughter of a woman who possesses millions."

"Your millions are tainted with infamy."

"You must respect them; as you must respect me, the marquis, and all who touch them."

"I owe you nothing."

"You owe me respect — respect, do you hear? If you won't listen I will force you to read this paper — this little paper which I showed this morning to the young fool whom D'Albigny just chastised in your presence."

"Does this paper prove that I am your lover's mistress?" asked Andrée.

"It proves that you are my daughter."

"That's false!"

"It matters little whether you believe it or not, my dear, providing I hold the proof. As I have already told you, I have the law on my side. I hold you and I intend to keep you."

"The law punishes sequestrations."

"The law punishes people who turn minors from their duty," rejoined Nana.

"That is precisely what you are trying to do."

"No, it is what the Naviels would do if they persisted in claiming you in spite of my rights."

"We will see about them."

"Whenever you like. Ah! you don't know what you lose by compelling me to act harshly toward you. My soul and heart were full of love for you, Andrée. I was so happy to find you again, so proud to have a daughter whose beauty was worthy of mine. And yet, now your obstinacy and your childishness compel me to care for your welfare in spite of yourself."

"Was it by way of caring for my welfare that you spoke of me as an abandoned girl?"

"Yes, I said so; I called out upon the housetops what you are and what you are not; and I will publish the story everywhere. I imagined it this morning in order to destroy your absurd matrimonial hopes, and you both of you fell into the trap which I had set for you. Ah! you have to deal with stronger folks than yourselves — that young gentleman and you. Well, now, he's outside and you are inside; and he will never return into my house again, I promise you; and you will never leave it, so there."

At this moment Nana heard a knock at the door. "Come in!" she cried.

It was Luc who presented himself on the threshold. "Ah!

is it you," she resumed with affected kindness, "what do you want, my good fellow?"

"I want to know, madame, what I'm to do with the young fellow downstairs. He has just recovered consciousness."

"Pack him into a cab and send him home. Here are his name and his address." So saying Nana handed Luc the card which Lucien had given on his arrival.

Luc took the card, read the name and then suddenly burst into loud, hysterical laughter. "Ah! ah!" he said, "no, it isn't possible! It would be too much of a joke." And he fled from the room as if he had been pursued by a ghost. One could still hear his mad laughter as he hurried down the stairs.

"Poor Face-to-Smack," thought Andrée, "couldn't he help me to get out of the house." And the presence of the ex-clown ignited a first ray of hope in her heart.

But Nana abruptly recalled her to reality. "Come, little one, calm yourself and reflect. Submit to the fate which makes you wealthy in spite of yourself. I will forgive your harshness, I will love you and see that you are loved by people worthy of your affection."

"You mean your own lovers, perhaps?"

"And why not, my beauty?" interrupted the Marquis D'Albigny whose lofty figure again appeared on the threshold of the boudoir. "Your mother must have told you what you owe her; and now we can have a talk together, we two."

"Yes, I will leave you together," said Nana as she rose. And with a glance of infernal irony at Andrée she disappeared, bending her majestic figure under the silken hanging.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"So be it," said Andrée resolutely; "you have just murdered my lover, and this morning your companion of shame told him that I was your mistress. I despise you both. Now let me go!"

"You cannot go. When you have consented to share your life with your mother and me, you will be allowed such liberty as falls to the lot of a rich woman. I have plans for you, Andrée, very grand plans: I wish to make a marchioness of you. Oh! not a make-believe marchioness like Nana, but a real one, married for good, calling herself the Marquis D'Albigny, with horses, carriages, a coat-of-arms and all the rest. Come, I think that's suitable enough."

"What! *I* marry you? Marry the lover of the woman who calls herself my mother?"

"There must be an end to everything, my dear, and I intend

to finish my career by marrying you. On the whole I'm not to be pitied, and a good many people would like to finish their lives in the same style. And, really, I don't see, even from your own point of view, why you should evince such a dislike to me. I'm not so bad looking, although I'm middle-aged. I dress properly, I know how to conduct myself in society, I have some money and a name. And, besides, if you don't care to become really my wife, well we will each have our own rooms — I can't be more obliging. I will even allow you, if you like, to engage that young man as — your secretary. Are these concessions enough? You see I am good-natured although I have your mother's consent on my side, as well as the law, my strength and my love."

"I do not understand you, sir."

"Oh! you will understand me by degrees. As I have previously told you, you have been badly educated. You are extremely prudish, and I'm not so much inclined to complain of it for the moment, as a satisfactory arrangement can be made."

"Your love horrifies me, and I feel ashamed of having inspired such views on the part of a man like yourself. You must consider me very vile to dare to suggest that I should take your name. Do you think that I'm ignorant of your loathsome career?"

"Oh! oh! my disdainful beauty. If you are acquainted with my career you must have had it related to you."

"I hear my work-girls talking about you; I hear of your disgraceful actions everywhere, everywhere. As you can't seduce me you offer to marry me! You would marry a dozen girls in the same way if the law wasn't there to prevent you. I tell you that straight to the face like a frank girl of the people ——"

"But you are the daughter of Nana, and she doesn't belong to the people."

"You never spoke more truly; and in the same way that she abandoned me to public charity when I was a child, in the same way I cast her off to-day!"

"You do wrongly; you might bring her back to — virtue."

"Rail, sir, rail! Virtue is your enemy and you detest it because it frightens you!"

"Oh, dear, no. Only virtue is stupid and it lacks stamina. As an instance, take that young fellow who rolls over at the first blow and faints away like a girl. I don't brag with you and I'm not a Tartuffe. I lack hypocrisy; and prefer to brave public opinion. But I bow down before the true Jesuits, the pietists with sanctimonious faces, the dissemblers who feign continence, the false ascetics who cry out in alarm whenever a novel or play belabors their hidden vices and exposes them in the full sunlight. Yes, I bow down before these folks because

they are more cunning than I am. Come, Andrée, I will forgive you in spite of all my advantages over you, in spite of your insults, in spite of your insolence toward a person older than yourself and whom your mother esteems and respects. I will grant you all the necessary time to file your nails, to grow more pliable, and become accustomed to living here. There is only one thing that I forbid you — and that is to return to work, to idiotic flirtation, mediocrity and common life. I want to make a real woman of you, and you will become the one I need, I'm sure of it. I shall leave your mother the task of casting you in a new mold, little one. And till that is done you are my prisoner. Till by-and-by; you will see me very often, however unpleasant it may be to you."

With a dry cough full of pitiless raillery D'Albigny left the room, leaving Andrée alone. She tried to open the door of the boudoir but she found that it was locked on the outside. She rang the bell but no one came. For several hours she remained there without being disturbed. But at night-fall a servant came to ask what she wished for her dinner. She thanked him and refused to eat. She was suspicious of everyone and everything. She had read in novels of young girls imprisoned in a similar manner and reduced to helplessness by the administration of a narcotic. She hoped however that some one would come to deliver her. Still her mind was most busy with thoughts of Lucien, who was perhaps grievously hurt. The manner in which the marquis had abused of his brute strength revolted her; and she felt greater esteem and more sincere affection than ever for the poor fellow who in his courage had not thought of his own inferior power.

She decided that she would refuse all nourishment, and allow herself to die of hunger if her liberty was not restored to her. She instinctively hoped to be delivered, either by M. Naviel or by Luc, or even by the commissary of police, whom Lucien or his mother would certainly complain to. Meanwhile, however, the night came on apace. The sky was very dark and the atmosphere very heavy. At last the servant returned and lighted the lamp. He left the door ajar for a moment, and Andrée noticed unconcernedly that a little puff of smoke was wafted from the hall into the boudoir. When the servant retired, he again secured the door on the outside, and Andrée heard the key grating in the lock. She once more became absorbed in her reflections. She felt uncomfortable; this house was strangely warm. What were her relatives doing? why was she left alone like this, at the mercy of Nana and her acolytes?

While she pondered thus, walking up and down with crossed arms, she perceived some smoke rising through a slit in the flooring in one corner of the boudoir. This smoke ascended in a tiny column at first, and then wound round in spirals which

eventually reached the ceiling, forming a compact mass above the chandelier. It grew thicker and thicker, and suddenly the mirror set in a crystal frame enriched with amethysts, became clouded, and reflected but a hazy light. The heat was increasing, and Andrée could scarcely breathe. What was the cause of this? She hastened to the window and opened it. A growing tumult was spreading through the house. People could be heard precipitately descending the grand staircase. And then there suddenly arose a loud cry of "Fire! Fire!"

Andrée recognized the voice of Virginie, the maid, who in her fright was screaming, "Help! Help!" out of the bath-room window.

At the same time, columns of smoke escaped from the low windows in the basement and climbed up the facade. As Andrée stood watching them she saw a man open the park gate and hasten away. Then she heard a fizzing of flames, a brazier-like crackling, a furious concentrated rumbling of confined internal fire rising from below; and she recognized the voice of Nana, exclaiming, in the sandy court-yard: "We must deluge the cellars! It will make a fine punch!"

However no one came to deliver the prisoner. It was hoped, no doubt, that the fire would be speedily extinguished. Three fire-engines were already on the spot. But the panes of all the basement windows burst out in turn, and blue jets of flame escaped through the apertures and ascended to the roof. In the boudoir meanwhile a dense yellow smoke filtered through all the joints in the flooring, through the rock-crystal mantelpiece and under the door, rising upward until it reached the smoke that had preceded it. Soon from the pendants of the chandelier to the ceiling there was but one dense cloud.

Andrée felt seriously alarmed. She was afraid that she would be forgotten in the disorder of such a panic; she was stifling, and no wonder, for the heat had become well nigh unbearable. Suddenly a loud crash resounded in the direction of the staircase, and the large bay-window of stained glass, which lighted the monumental steps, was tinged with a ruddy glow. The glass was shivered in atoms. A huge sheaf of flame leaped out of the broad aperture and ascended in spirals to the dark sky which it illuminated lugubriously. At this moment the long-threatening storm burst forth. A lightning flash darted through the celestial space and the solemn roar of thunder shook the window panes of the boudoir. The walls were becoming hot. The fire had invaded the staircase, and it was reaching the conservatory where all the glass began to crack and fall. A fiery vapor full of sparks entered by the window which Andrée had left open. Then the sparks in turn flew on to the curtains and riddled them with black holes, fringed by incandescent circles which constantly expanded.

Andrée leaned out of the window and called for help. But the noise of the engines, the fizzing of the water raining over the flames — now spreading throughout the main building — and the mingled cries of alarm rising in the night effectually drowned her voice, which soon grew weaker and weaker.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

DURING the earlier part of the day Luc had been absent from the house, for Nana had entrusted him with various errands. He had returned soon after the altercation between Lucien Despretz and the Marquis D'Albigny, and one of his first duties had been to go and ask Nana what was to be done with the young man. When he learned the name of Andrée's lover, by the card which Nana handed him, he was seized with a strange emotion. This card was identical with the one he had seen on the door facing the Naviels' rooms, on the evening when Pierre had saved his life. The name of Despretz made Luc remorseful. Long years before, he had lived with a young woman called Adèle Despretz whom he had promised to marry. He had indeed remained seven years with her, and had then suddenly abandoned her to hide himself in the country during three brief months with Nana, whom D'Albigny already patronized. Nana's amours were never of long duration, and when she found herself in an interesting state she became so infuriated that she discarded Luc and returned to her wealthier protectors. From that moment fortune overwhelmed her with favors, just as it overwhelmed Luc with misfortune. Accused of theft, thrown into prison, discharged without a penny in his pocket, he had become in turn a mountebank, a beggar, a thief, a detective and a lackey.

He had never met Mademoiselle Despretz since he had abandoned her for Nana, and he had lost all traces of her. He had merely learned some years afterward, that an acquaintance of his had met her one day in the Jardin des Plantes giving her hand to a little boy whom she called Lucien. Now Luc remembered very well that she had often said to him: "If ever we have a son he shall be named Lucien."

Some time afterward, when he saw M. Lucien Despretz's card on the door facing the Naviels' apartment, he fled precipitately in the fear that he might be recognized by his old mistress — that is supposing this M. Lucien were the son of Adèle Despretz. Luc had returned one day to the Rue Crozatier to ask the house porter if there was a Mademoiselle Adèle Despretz among the tenants. But the porter answered, "We only have a widow Despretz here and she lives with her son."

Now, if the young fellow who had fallen a victim to D'Albigny's brutality lived with his mother, and if the latter's name were Adèle a very peculiar and grievous complication might arise. By a strange fatality Andrée was but the adopted daughter of the Naviel's; her real mother was Nana, and her real father, Luc. And Luc, according to all probability, was also the father of Lucien Despretz who asked for Andrée's hand. If that were the case, the marriage became an impossibility. Although Luc was accustomed to suffering, a poignant emotion tortured his heart at this thought. It seemed to him as if some terrible fatality hovered over his life, over all he had ever known or loved. And Andrée, little Andrée before whom he did not wish to blush, seemed caught in the tangled skein of his lamentable career. He had resolved to conceal from her the painful tie of relationship between them, but he could not suffer such a marriage as was contemplated. And at this thought he was seized with an invincible longing to ascertain whether his presentiments were correct or not.

With his mind in a state of utter confusion he darted to the spot where his fellow servant had removed the injured man. Lucien had just recovered from his fainting fit when Luc arrived saying to the other lackey, "I am going to take this young fellow home. Will you go and fetch me a cab?"

The footman started off and soon returned exclaiming: "The cab's outside, old fellow."

"All right; thanks. Just help me to put him inside."

Between the pair of them they carried Lucien to the vehicle, and installed him as comfortably as possible on the back seat. Luc placed himself in front and gave the address in the Rue Crozatier. As they rolled along he could not help thinking of all the evil which his mad passion for this woman, Nana, had caused him to commit, of the misfortunes which this same passion had brought upon himself and upon others, of the eternal mourning which would shroud so much domestic happiness, of the moral ruin of the men to whom Nana had inoculated her own depravity, and of the material ruin she had effected by her extravagance and vice. His mind was tortured by the thought that it was impossible for these two young beings, so loving, so upright and heroic in the face of unjust fatality, to marry and be happy. And to complete the abomination, Andrée's infamous mother wished to drag her into depravity, and the marquis would perhaps cause the death of Lucien Despretz. Fortunately Luc exaggerated the gravity of the injuries which the young man had sustained. He was better already. He had already recovered consciousness when the vehicle started, and on reaching the Rue Crozatier, Luc helped him into the house-porter's room and seated him in an arm-chair.

"On what floor does Madame Despretz live?" asked Nana's valet.

"Third floor to the left," was the reply

Luc bounded up the first flight, but on reaching the second one he paused at every step, asking himself how he should prepare the young fellow's mother for the bad news he brought her. At last he rang the bell, and heard some footsteps slowly approaching the door. For a moment his heart stopped beating, but the door opened and Madame Despretz showed her gentle face, crowned betimes with white hair.

"Are you Madame Adèle Despretz?" asked Luc, in a trembling voice.

"Yes, I am called Adèle Despretz. What do you desire, sir?"

"I have come — excuse me, madame, I am frightfully troubled — but your son."

"Has any misfortune happened to Lucien?"

"Oh! it isn't serious, madame."

"My son is injured! where is he, sir, where is he?"

"In the porter's room."

On hearing this, Madame Despretz did not tarry. She was anxious to succor the son she loved so well. This woman, whom grief had aged so rapidly and whose vital spring had seemed broken, suddenly recovered all her girlish agility. Luc listened for a moment to the swift pit-a-pat of her slippers as she vanished down the winding staircase, and then he followed her to assist the porter in bringing the injured man up to his room. Between them they carried him to his bed taking every precaution to avoid shaking him.

"It is nothing, mother," said Lucien in a weak voice when he saw her at the bedside, looking at him with the tears streaming down her face.

"Is that true? Don't try to quiet me by deceiving me."

"No, I assure you, it's nothing, mother. I don't suffer," he rejoined.

The porter went out to buy some vulnerary at the herbalists, and Luc remained standing near the bed, gazing sorrowfully at the mother and the son. But little daylight entered the room through the curtained window which overlooked the narrow depths of an inner courtyard. There was something claustral about the aspect of this bachelor's apartment. You might have fancied yourself in a novice's cell. A white deal table served as a washstand. A rush-bottomed chair stood against the wall. On a walnut chest of drawers there were some books — school prizes with gilt edges — and behind the door some old clothes were hanging from a couple of pegs. As the ex-clown stood gazing on the scene, the solemn room, the grieving mother, the injured lad, a silent tear coursed slowly down his cheek. Lucien

noticed it and felt surprised that one of his adversary's servants should evince so much sympathy.

"I am greatly touched by your solicitude, my friend," he said. "Who are you, pray?"

"You can see by my livery that I am in the service of the woman whose lover——"

"Ah! I'm sure of it now! He has fought with that man on account of Andrée!" interrupted Madame Despretz. "Yes, that must be it! The Naviels did very wrong to let their daughter visit that woman, Nana."

"Yes, mother, they did wrong," said Lucien, "and that was my opinion at the time. And now that infamous creature, Nana, pretends that Andrée was seduced by D'Albigny on the day she consented to lunch with them."

"That is false, for I was there!" cried Luc.

"But what is *true*, unfortunately," rejoined Lucien, "is that Andrée is not a virtuous woman's daughter."

"What do you mean, Lucien?" asked Madame Despretz.

"Andrée is Nana's daughter."

"That is impossible. My God! He is delirious."

"No, madame," said Luc, "it is quite true. This marriage is quite impossible now."

"And yet Mademoiselle Andrée may be a virtuous girl, even if she is the daughter of a worthless woman. A scoundrel's son may become an honest lad. My poor Lucien, who is honesty incarnate, had a scoundrel, a coward, for *his* father."

The lackey's pale face became livid, and he stammered in a husky voice: "Why do you teach your son to curse his father? How do you know that the man you speak of hasn't led a miserable life?"

"He has never suffered as much as I have! Look at me. My hair is white, and yet I am barely five-and-forty! Ah, I've learned to know men — to know how little they are worth."

"So be it, curse and disown the scamp! Crush his name and honor and everything under your feet. You are quite right in doing so, madame! The fellow who broke your heart can only have been a scoundrel. But, in the name of heaven, don't talk like that before the flesh of his flesh!"

In his trouble, Luc, who was anxious to get away, mistook one door for another and found himself in an adjoining room. Madame Despretz followed him there to show him out. But scarcely was he alone with her than he threw himself at her feet, and striking his forehead against the floor, he stammered in a whisper, "Yes, I am a scoundrel! Forgive me! Forgive me, Adèle! Curse me, curse me; I am Luc — recognize me only to turn me out. But never, I beg of you, never in presence of that honest young fellow, never speak evil of his father — let him remain ignorant of everything. If he questions you, tell

him that you don't know what has become of his father; that he is probably dead, yes, dead, do you hear? And death would be the best thing for a Judas like me."

Madame Despretz seemed transfigured. In one minute she had regained a youthful air, and her features, usually expressive of mingled sadness and humility, were now all aglow with indignation. "Ah! I recognize you now," she cried. "What! you are the man — you say you are — and you dare to come here! And you can no longer find the door to leave. Go — there it is!"

When Lucien Despretz found himself alone with his mother he told her what had happened. Nana asserted her rights over Andrée, as if she could have any rights over a child she had abandoned. And more than that, the young girl was sequestered by Nana, and not allowed to leave the house. D'Albigny had cynically proclaimed his hopes, and it was evident enough that the poor girl's honor was seriously threatened. The Naviels must therefore be warned at once. Madame Despretz did not like to leave her son alone, in his present state of weakness, especially, but Lucien kept on begging her to go and consult Madame Naviel in view of effecting Andrée's release. The young fellow and his mother were uncertain as to the law in such a case, for the Naviels were only the adoptive parents, while Nana could prove that she was the real mother of the girl whom she sought to detain in her power.

"I am afraid that you have some great sorrow in store for you, my poor boy," said Madame Despretz. "Perhaps this woman, with her artful language and her brilliant offers, will triumph over Andrée's resistance. She is a pretty, amiable and good-natured girl, no doubt, but she is also rather coquettish and adventurous; and her imagination sets to work at the slightest opportunity. You must be on your guard, my son."

"You will make me feel desperate, mother, if you talk like that," interrupted Lucien. "Come, make haste and go and warn Andrée's parents. If D'Albigny has to deal with Naviel, he will find some one to answer him."

At this moment the porter came up with a cup of warm *tisane*. "There, Monsieur Despretz, drink that," said the worthy fellow — an old soldier who now combined the duties of a postman with those of a house-porter. "Drink that; there's nothing better for a bad blow. If you have to go out, Madame Despretz, don't let this accident detain you. I'll stay up-stairs with your son, and my wife will attend to the front do or meantime."

"I accept your offer gratefully. I shall take a cab so as to be back sooner," replied the widow.

She hastily dressed, put on a black shawl and a plain bonnet, and went off, leaving Lucien in charge of the friendly porter.

Forty minutes later the cab she had taken drew up at the Naviels' door.

Madame Despretz gave a loud ring, which was immediately answered by Margot. "Has Mademoiselle Andrée come home?" the old lady asked of the work-girl.

"No, madame; and indeed Madame Naviel is really anxious about her. But come in, pray; I will go and tell her that you are there."

"Don't disturb her, I can talk to her very well in the work-room."

"Where is Andrée!" asked Madame Naviel as soon as she saw Lucien's mother.

"At Nana's."

"What! since this morning?"

"Yes, my dear Madame Naviel, and my son, my poor Lucien, was almost murdered there by a man named D'Albigny ——"

"The Marquis d'Albigny?"

"He nearly killed him with a blow on the chest. As for Andrée, Nana pretends you are not her mother. She says, in fact. that Andrée is *her* child."

"It is quite true, Andrée is only my adopted daughter; but I fancy that I have been more of a mother to her than that woman, who, although she may roll in gold, nevertheless sent her baby to the Foundling Hospital, by a servant. We had no children, Naviel and I, and no hopes of having any, for I had met with a sad accident. We were dreadfully lonely, as you can imagine, the more so as we were both very fond of children. Well, at last we thought of adopting one, and Naviel went to the Foundling Hospital and chose a girl. I should have preferred a boy, but he was the master, and he did as he liked. When they showed him the baby they told him that she was that woman's daughter, but he took her all the same. She was such a pretty little thing, and from that time till now we have never had cause to complain of her. So we want to keep her with us until she is married. That's the least return due us after all the care we have taken of her, and besides, my husband was told that the real mother no longer had any right over her."

At this moment the door opened, and Pierre Naviel came in. "Do you know what has happened?" he asked of his wife.

"Nothing pleasant, surely."

"Oh! it won't affect us much, but it will give some work to the carpenters, plumber and glaziers."

"What's the matter, then, what are you talking of?"

"Why I have just seen three fire-engines dashing up toward the Parc Monceau."

As Naviel spoke a ruddy glare streamed through the window of the work-room, and all the girls rose up to go and look at the fire. Beyond the trees of the Parc Monceau, against the dense

blackness of the stormy sky, a column of lurid smoke was rising, with thousands of sparks whirling round and round in its midst. At the same time a formidable storm burst over the city, and the thunder began to growl.

"Doesn't it just burn," remarked Margot.

"There's no mistake about that," replied the others.

Madame Naviel had drawn her husband aside and was speaking to him in an undertone. Suddenly he broke out into a volley of oaths: "Why, curse it all!" he cried, "the fire's at that very woman's house. A fireman told me so. And you say that our girl is still there? Ah! curse it! curse it!"

"Would you believe, Monsieur Naviel," exclaimed Madame Despretz, "that Nana's marquis almost killed my son because he wanted to bring Andrée away?"

"Ah! I see through their little game! Curse them both, the harlot and her bully!" fiercely cried Pierre, as he rushed out of the house. "They shall pay for it with their skins. The pair of reprobates! I'll do for them. I'll tear off their flesh till I see the color of their bones!"

He went on through the side streets at a fast pace. The rumbling-like noise of a furnace filled the air, which smelled more and more strongly of fire. You could hear a crashing as of falling glass, and a crackling as of flaming woodwork. The storm was now growing more distant, and the lightning flashed at longer intervals. Suddenly the rain ceased falling, and then amid the noise of the conflagration one could hear the shouts of the firemen, the cries of alarm, and the bugle calls of a trumpeter, who, standing on a garden wall, transmitted the orders of his officers. M. Naviel had just passed through the gate conducting into Nana's grounds, when a commissary of police asked him where he was going. "I am looking for my daughter," replied Naviel. "She took some work here to-day, and hasn't returned home since."

"It seems that several persons have been seen entering the house — and nobody knows whether they have left or not. It is feared some of them may have been burned to death. A minute ago a footman climbed in by the ladder, which you can see below that window ——"

"Very good, sir; I shall do the same."

CHAPTER XXIX.

When Nana left the marquis and Andrée together, she returned into her room to dress, for she was expecting a visit from the rajah. He arrived a few minutes after the Prince of Mulhausen, and seemed very tired. He bowed coldly to the

German, and then sank at once into an arm-chair. Nana went to him, sat herself on his knees, and kissed him repeatedly, despite the presence of Mulhausen, who hardly liked it, for it clashed with his own pretensions as a woman-killer. In his vexation he began walking heavily up and down, from the bed to the window, making the floor creak under his weigh. Nana looked up at once, and said to him, "Will you go and find the marquis? Take him to dine somewhere, and tell him ——"

"That you no longer belong to us? That's what you mean, my dear, isn't it?"

"Quite so, that is it, yes, that is it," rejoined Nana, with a nervous little laugh; and she held out her hand to the prince, who stooped to kiss her on the arm, and then lighted a cigar at the chandelier.

"You see I turn them off," said Nana to the Hindu, as soon as they were alone together.

"Yes," he replied, with a sigh, and, handing her a Russian-leather portfolio, he added: "take this, and thanks."

She negligently threw the portfolio into the drawer of a cheffonier, and rejoined, "You are really a dear little man, and I'm very pleased with you. My house belongs to you, my servants are at your orders, and I myself am yours."

"Mine alone?" asked the rajah.

"Naturally," said Nana; and then inhaling the atmosphere with her sensual mobile nostrils, she added, "dear me, how strange it smells! Don't you think so?"

"No—I only smell the perfume of your hair."

"It's funny, I thought I smelled some smoke. How soon it has grown dark! We are going to have a storm. How pleasant to remain here with my handsome prince, my handsome rajah."

She was interrupted by a lightning flash which darted diagonally across the window, and at the same moment the Prince of Mulhausen re-entered the room. "The house is on fire!" he exclaimed, in a voice husky with emotion.

"What of that?" rejoined Nana, harshly. "It's no reason why you should take my room for an omnibus. Where's D'Albigny?"

"In his room."

"*He* doesn't lose his head at all events. Come, gentlemen, let us see what is the matter."

She rang the bell, but no servant came. Then rising to her feet she went through the ante-room toward the grand staircase. But scarcely had she opened the door than a cloud of yellow smoke swept in and almost suffocated her. "Dear me," she said, "we might stifle here!"

"Where is the servants' staircase?" asked Mulhausen, with a terrified air.

"It isn't a question of the stairs. Go and fetch D'Albigny. I want him."

Mulhausen did not, or would not, understand her, but remained rooted on the spot. So Nana decided to act herself, and hastened, alone, into the marquis' private rooms. He was no longer there, and the apartments were so full of smoke that she retraced her steps, and joined the prince and the rajah in the ante-room. "Let us go down," she said. "D'Albigny is probably below." And she again opened the door communicating with the landing of the grand staircase. The light of the chandelier could not be detected, so thick was the smoke, above which the tall exotic plants barely reared their topmost leaves. Suddenly a crash below was heard, and between the double flight of pink marble steps a winding column of blue flames leaped with a bound to the topmost ceiling, the frescoes of which peeled off and fell below in fragments. Nana precipitately returned into the ante-room, and closed the door behind her.

"I think that we are done for," gasped the German, much as he had done on the day of the review. "You will certainly be the cause of my death, Nana."

She laughed nervously, and replied; "Or else you will be the cause of mine. Which could be the greater misfortune do you think? I fancy, my poor Mulhausen, that it would be easier to find another prince like you than another woman like me."

"I don't think there is anything to laugh about," retorted Mulhausen, whose vanity was wounded.

"Come," said Nana, "follow me." And she guided them along a narrow passage which led to the servants' staircase, and the domestic offices. As they went onward in Indian file, the smoke grew thicker and thicker, and the walls became extremely hot. Reaching the staircase at last they swiftly descended it and left the house.

The conflagration was now gaining the first floor from the conservatory. Four lofty windows were suddenly illuminated with a ruddy glow, the window panes blew into fragments, and leaping tongues of flame darted out with an angry roar.

"Dash it all?" said Nana suddenly to the rajah, "why you have forgotten your securities in my room."

The rajah raised his arms to the sky, which the conflagration had illuminated with a blood-like reflection. "It was written," he sighed, "it was written that I should be ruined in your house."

"But my room is not yet on fire. Go and fetch the bonds, rajah. Go and fetch the bonds," she ordered, harshly.

The Hindu gave her a glance full of bitter resignation. "Is that your love, daughter of Paris?" he murmured; and then he bounded up the servants' staircase, and disappeared amid the

smoke. The darkness was so complete that he speedily lost his way, and groped about for some time in utter ignorance of his bearings. His breath had just begun to fail him, when he found himself in front of a door, under which a faint ray of light was filtering. He could hear the roar of the flames in the adjacent gallery, and the whole mansion seemed to quiver in the embrace of the conflagration. Brave as he was he decided that it was better to retire, and tried to open the door in front of him. But he found that it was locked.

"Help!" cried a woman's voice on the other side, "I am shut in here. Whoever you may be, save me!"

The rajah started. The sound of this voice suddenly troubled him. But recovering his self-possession, he threw himself with all his strength against the door, and drove it inward with his shoulder. Andrée Naviel stood before him in the dim lamplight. She seemed taller amid the clouds that surrounded her; the splendor of her youthful beauty was softened by the opaque atmosphere, and looked like some radiant apparition of the Holy Virgin. For a moment the Hindu stood still, absolutely fascinated; then stepping forward, "I thank my destiny," he said, in a grave voice, "for having led me here so that I might save you."

"Can we leave the house, sir?"

"With you, death would not appal me."

"Who are you, sir?"

"I *was* the friend of Nana."

"The rajah?"

"Yes; I had placed my whole soul and my whole fortune in this house. If I can snatch you from the peril, my soul will be saved with you."

"But you must save what belongs to you, if there is still time, sir!"

"I left all my bonds and securities in Nana's room scarcely an hour ago."

"You must save them, then. Let us go there."

They speedily reached Nana's apartment, but scarcely had they entered it than a formidable detonation was heard in the basement, and the lights of the chandelier were suddenly extinguished. The gas meter had just exploded. Despite the obscurity, however, the Hindu succeeded in reaching the chiffonier, in which Nana had deposited the securities. He felt for his portfolio, found it, and then at once drew Andrée into the ante-chamber, so as to reach the passage conducting to the servants' staircase. The heat was increasing, and the walls were now extremely hot. There was a smell of scorched wool about the old Aubusson tapestry. The folding doors communicating with the grand staircase were bending and cracking under the onslaught of the flames which leaped up between the

marble steps. Suddenly the doors parted in the middle, and fell in burning fragments, which at once set fire to the hangings in the ante-chamber. Darting along the walls, the flames soon reached the threshold of Nana's bedroom; and at the same moment the chandelier of the grand staircase was precipitated onto the mosaic pavement of the vestibule, and shivered to atoms with a terrific crash.

CHAPTER XXX.

When D'Albigny left Andrée he was not aware that Nana meant to stay at home with the rajah; he fancied she would go to the circus as was usual every Saturday evening, so he arrayed himself in a dress-coat and a white cravat. He had very serious thoughts of marrying Andrée Naviel, even if he had to cast Nana overboard. Andrée was Nana in her youth again, and despite her acquired virtue he divined in her nature a fatal germ transmitted by her mother. Now he wished to turn this germ of evil to his personal advantage, and he was deceiving Nana when he told her that he meant her to share the profits of his scheme. In reality he intended to avail himself of her maternal rights to separate Andrée from the Naviels. But as soon as marriage had invested him with paramount authority over the young girl, he meant to carry out a plan, an infamous plan, in the fruits of which Nana herself would have no share.

Under present circumstances, however, it was necessary that he should remain on good terms with her; for she understood a luxurious life so well, she was so expert in "business" matters, she had such a haughty contempt for honest prejudices, and she braved everything so boldly. The skillful way in which she led men by their passions, artfully flattering their petty pride, made her a fitting accomplice for such a man as D'Albigny. She was set in such a splendid frame, moreover, living in regal luxury, in a perfect palace, which, in carrying out an intrigue, was especially fitted to smooth difficulties and awaken admiration. The house, the furniture and the works of art were all in her name, and although D'Albigny was apparently at home, he was in reality her dependent. The semblance of opulence which the marquis derived by this life in common with the courtesan, greatly facilitated his stock exchange speculations, for it trebled his credit. The man who was supposed to "keep" Nana inspired fools with unlimited confidence.

And yet, he none the less thought of replacing her. Old age was approaching, and when she had no more lovers to eat up she would make but a mouthful of the house where D'Albigny had established his headquarters. So he must look ahead, find

another Nana, marry her if needs be, attract her by the prospect of a title and a life of luxury. He cared very little about what means he employed so long as he attained his end. He was by no means displeased with the idea of marriage such as he understood it; and indeed he would have resorted to any sacrament that he could have twisted to his use. Later on, when Andrée was launched into the sphere of vice, he meant to liquidate Nana's belongings, and send her to live in the country. But, until she had used up the rajah and finished Mulhausen, she was worth what they estimated her, that is to say a great deal more than her intrinsic value. This was the reason why D'Albigny still remained Nana's official protector.

He was interrupted in the midst of his reflections by the cries of alarm, and the noise of flight which filled the house. His first impulse was to place all his jewelry and precious papers about his person, and then through the smoke which was already filling the grand staircase, he descended into the park. "Where is your mistress?" he asked of one of the servants.

"In her room," was the reply.

"Alone?"

"I am unable to say, sir, whether she received any one or not."

"I can inform you, Monsieur le Marquis," said Luc, who now drew near. "Madame is with his excellency, the rajah."

"Ah! very good."

D'Albigny wished to penetrate into the cellars where the fire had first broken out, but he was obliged to beat a retreat, so fast was the conflagration spreading. A short time afterward Nana came down by the servants' staircase with the rajah and Mulhausen. The Hindu went into the house again to fetch his securities, and a few minutes afterward the marquis handed Luc a key. "There will be a hundred napoleons for you," said he, "if you save Mademoiselle Andrée Naviel!"

"What, is she still in the house?" cried Luc.

"Yes, in the boudoir. You can open the door with this key."

At this moment the flames began to stream out of the gallery windows with furious impetuosity; and soon afterward a crash was heard, the ceiling of the grand drawing-room had fallen in. As the flames reached the attics, the sheets of zinc on the roof began to melt and poured, incandescent, down the walls. The framework in its turn caught fire from one end to the other with frightful rapidity. Immense red sheets of flame rose up into the dark sky, where the storm growled at intervals, and where the clouds themselves seemed to be on fire. Having fixed a ladder against the window of Nana's room, Luc sprang up the rungs and disappeared amid the smoke.

"Why did the rajah go back into the house?" asked the

marquis of Nana, who was just ordering the head coachman to have the horses removed from the stables.

"I sent him to look for his securities which we forgot in my room, in the first surprise."

"The deuce! Do you want him to roast, then?" grumbled the marquis. "He is quite capable of not finding your room; he may lose himself and perish miserably. I am going to his help."

"You are mad, D'Albigny. I am at a loss to understand you."

"I dare say so, my dear." And he added between his teeth: "If it were only a question of saving the rajah!"

D'Albigny now tried to enter the house in his turn, but the heat in the narrow passage beyond the servants' door scorched his face so badly that he retreated, and coming out into the court-yard, approached a fire-engine, dipped his handkerchief in the cold water, and placed it over his face like a mask. Then once more he darted into the furnace, through the smoke and flying sparks which swept along the narrow passage leading to the ante-room where the hot plaster of the ceiling fell onto the burning floor. At last, however, he reached Nana's room. Whilst speaking to the courtesan a bright idea had occurred to him. The rajah might have lost his way in the house and have perished in his endeavors to find the way out. In that case, it was advisable that he, D'Albigny, should save the Hindu's securities for himself! He was darting toward the cheffonier with this object in view, when suddenly through the lurid smoke rising from the basement a man leaped into the room by the open window.

"Who are *you*?" asked the marquis.

"My name is Naviel."

"What do you want?"

"My daughter."

"You have no daughter left, my fine fellow; I intend to marry her."

"Ah! so you are D'Albigny? Where is she?"

"That only concerns her mother and myself."

"All right, marquis. I have heard a number of vile stories about you, but I didn't know that you robbed women of their honor. But, stop a bit, there are some fathers who don't tolerate that, but who break the jaws of scamps like you."

"In the first place, my friend, you are not her father."

"Yes, I am; at least in the eyes of the law, and by right of her affection and respect."

"In spite of the mother who bore her?"

"Yes, sir, in spite of the heartless creature who abandoned her when she ought to have brought her up, and who only

claims her now so that she may sell her. Come, sir, make haste, tell me where Andrée is."

"I don't know."

"You lie!"

"Do you know how I treat people who insult me? Just ask that young fellow who came here this morning for Nana's daughter."

"You are a coward to have struck a lad who hadn't the strength to fight with you. But I work at machinery, and if I lay my hands on you I'll make you speak, sure enough."

"Very well, then, come outside."

"You shan't go out until I know where my daughter is."

"Then we shall be burned to death."

"Oh! I'm not afraid of fire, I spend my days at the door of a furnace. So much the worse for you, if *you* burn."

"Well, stay if you choose, but I am going."

"For the last time, tell me where my daughter is."

"I shall tell you nothing of the kind."

"Scoundrel!" cried Naviel, who was now fully enraged. And seizing D'Albigny by the throat with one hand, he threw him on to Nana's bed, while with the other he tore down the curtain cordons to garrot him with. D'Albigny tried to free himself, but Naviel's hold was firm.

"Release me," gasped the marquis, "and I'll tell you."

The mechanic set him free. But with sudden tiger-like treachery the marquis at once sprang upon his adversary and caught him round the body. The attack was so swift that Naviel was lifted off the floor and stretched on his back before he could defend himself. At this moment Nana's bed caught fire, and the flames swept up the white-silk hangings, embroidered with black sphinxes, enveloping them in the same blaze from the carpet to the ceiling. Then suddenly the silver-framed Venetian mirror was shattered into fragments which fell upon the statue of Time. The clock immediately stopped.

Naviel had been able to throw his arms round the marquis' neck and draw him down with him. Now, too, he twined his legs around D'Albigny's, and paralyzed his movements. For some seconds they remained thus clutching hold of each other, puffing like wild beasts, coiled together like serpents under the sparks which rained from the ceiling and the canopy of ruddy smoke. Suddenly D'Albigny shrieked aloud: "Release me — I am burning!"

They had rolled over together. Maddened with the rage of a betrayed lion, Naviel, undermost at first, was uppermost now. The marquis was stretched on his stomach on the burning floor and the mechanic's knee was pressed upon his loins. Holding him thus breathless, Naviel brought his wrists back and fast-

ened his arms together at the elbows with the silken cord, which he had previously torn from the bed-curtains.

"Murderer!" gasped D'Albigny, whose convulsed face was horribly scorched by the burning floor.

"Where is Andrée?" asked Naviel again.

"Pick me up and follow me."

Naviel helped him on to his legs and they then tried to reach Nana's boudoir. But it was already too late. The furious conflagration had invaded every passage. The floors gave way, the mosaic pavements were engulfed, and hungry flames streamed upward in one vast eruption. At this moment a kind of phantom, with a blackened face and singed hair darted toward D'Albigny. It was Luc. "Here is the key of the boudoir, sir," he said. "She is no longer there. I found the door burst open. She has no doubt been saved. Let us think of ourselves. Time presses."

"If the little one has suffered by your fault, you miserable marquis," roared Naviel, in a threatening voice, "I shall call you to account! Remember it, and now decamp!" And pulling out his pocket-knife, he cut the cords which bound D'Albigny's arms.

"The deuce! The floor is giving way. To the ladder, gentlemen, to the ladder!" cried Luc. And he darted, the first, through the flames which were filling Nana's room. Naviel followed him, the marquis coming last.

They all three climbed on to the balustrade of the window, but the ladder with which Luc and Naviel had reached the room was no longer there! Their situation was terrible, and it was in vain that they called for help; for a veil of red flame and vapor concealed them from the firemen below. Suddenly the flooring of Nana's room gave way on one side, forming an incandescent crater. All the furniture glided down the incline, and, eventually, the flaming bed itself toppled over into the fiery furnace. The huge silver eagle disappeared the last. Then the flames rushed out of the windows, rising like fiery tongues to a tremendous height. Luc, Naviel and the marquis had abandoned the window, and stood upon the cornice, but the wall was growing so hot that they could no longer lean against it.

"Well, so much the worse," said the marquis, suddenly, "I shall jump it." And Luc and Naviel saw him take a spring and disappear amid the smoke.

"I see a ladder at the window of the fencing-hall," said Luc to Naviel, pointing at the wing perpendicular to the main building. "Do you think you can walk as far as that?"

"Let us try at all events; if I can't keep up, I shall jump it."

Accordingly, with their faces to the wall, they slowly advanced along the cornice. On the way they found three windows from which the flames were beginning to dart. They profited by a

momentary lull to pass these dangerous points, and with their hair singed, their clothes in shreds and bad burns about their bodies, they finally succeeded in reaching the ladder which Luc had noticed from a distance. As they reached the ground they shook hands and parted with cordial expressions of good will.

Luc at once went to help the firemen. The marquis was in the front rank, and as soon as he saw the valet he asked: "What has become of that scoundrel who was with us?"

"He got down with me, Monsieur le Marquis."

"It was very lucky you were up-stairs, my good fellow, for without you I should have been murdered by the ruffian. I had just surprised him trying to steal some securities, and so he wanted to suppress me."

Nana, who was near at hand, approached D'Albigny and exclaimed with an evil smile: "Luc can bear witness to the scoundrel's violence, as he arrived just in time to save you, my dear fellow."

"Yes, madame," said Luc, "I'll bear witness when the time comes. You may depend upon it. But wouldn't it have been better to have the man arrested at once?"

"Yes, certainly," replied Nana, "why did you let him escape?"

The marquis took her by the arm and drew her on one side. "You will understand, my dear," he said, with a sardonic smile, "that if I had the fellow arrested the police would have begun by searching him."

"Well?"

"Well, nothing would have been found on his person, and his innocence would have been established. Now, I am anxious to avoid that. This would be a very secondary matter for me and I shouldn't attach any importance to it if this individual were not a serious obstacle to our plans concerning Andrée. If she has been saved, and the rajah's millions have evaporated with or without him, we shall never see the rajah or his millions or your daughter again."

"Oh! I don't admit that my influence over the rajah is ended. Whoever has loved Nana will love her always."

"By the way, what have you done with Mulhausen?"

"He has vanished like the others. One might imagine that people fancy Nana to be ruined."

"Hum! It falls little short of it. We shall obtain barely fifty thousand francs a year from what remains to you. And that means misery for you. But as for Mulhausen, he will come back again."

"Do you know what has been done with the horses and carriages?"

"They are all over there — in the park. There was tremend-

ous difficulty in getting the horses out of the stables, and they can scarcely be controlled even now. The fire terrifies them."

"I was at least in hopes that the firemen would save the wing of the house, but see the flames have reached the fencing-hall — I can't look at that window without remembering that on the night of the ball I witnessed your duel with Stog from the balcony over there. I could see both of your shadows on that curtain. Ah! it's flaming now. It was most fantastical, my dear fellow; I saw your sword lunge out, and Stog, poor Stog, fall back! I'm afraid that his death has brought me misfortune."

"Oh! oh! Don't you know that superstition is only allowable among old women, Nana?"

"But don't you see that —— Oh! how frightful! Everything is flaming. Ah! we shall only save our skins, my dear fellow. It's a great deal, of course, but it isn't enough. The final struggle will begin. But with you, D'Albigny, I shan't fear anything."

Above the burning mansion the terrible glare was growing larger and larger. The conflagration seemed to expand like a fan waved by an invisible hand. The firemen were quite disheartened by the failure of their endeavors, and most of them looked on with their arms crossed, while a few watered the roofs of some neighboring houses to prevent them from catching fire. All the stories of Nana's mansion were burning now, and the flames shot out of every window, rising upward in red tongues which the wind dispersed among the clouds. One corner of the roof, which had so far remained intact, at last fell in between the blackened walls of the mansion, every aperture of which seemed the entry of a furnace. Then under the pressure of the hot smoke rising in raging spirals, a chimney-stack began to totter, and a cry resounded: "Look out! Take care! Every one back!"

The lofty chimney tottered once more and then fell. There was a loud crash, amid which one heard a cry of pain from some unfortunate fellow who had been struck by a fragment of red-hot brick.

"Well, my dear fellow," said Nana to the marquis, "there is nothing more to keep us here. There is only some land for sale. Let us take a cab and go to some hotel."

CHAPTER XXXI.

M. Lucien Despretz had no knowledge of the conflagration which destroyed Nana's house, shattering her ill-gotten fortune like providential punishment. When Madame Despretz returned from the Naviels she succeeded in hiding her alarm concerning

Andrée, who had not yet returned. But she spoke to him of love with sceptical bitterness and harsh disdain. "Lucien," she said, "if you have any affection for me, and if you don't want me to die of grief, you will stay and live with me. Your mother loves you with all her heart, yes, with all her heart, my dear child. You are my only consolation in this world where everything but you means mourning, remorse and disgust for me! I have often told you of it before, and I did not blush to do so. I have had many a dark day, many an hour of grief, my path has been crossed by betrayal and moistened with tears. I loved a scoundrel!——"

"You told me so, mother; but forget him, forget him pray——"

"But I did not tell you everything, Lucien; and as you have decided to marry, you must ultimately learn what I have not been brave enough to tell you, This scoundrel, your father, was not my husband."

"Do you think then that I blush for being a natural child, do you think that I respect you less? I rather love you the more, knowing what you have suffered on my account."

"But remember it may affect your engagement with Andrée; she believes that I am a widow, and when she learns——"

"If Andrée were capable of breaking off our marriage for such a motive, I should cease to esteem her, for only cowardly hearts and petty minds could reproach a man for his mother's misfortune and his father's misconduct. Yes, if Andrée parted from me for such a reason, far from regretting her, I should feel glad to be enlightened in time as to the value of her promises. But fortunately that will not happen. Andrée is a generous girl, and when I tell her——"

"Promise me not to say anything until the necessary formalities oblige you to do so. I hoped that this secret would always be buried between ourselves! On your wedding day, Lucien, your mother will have more cause to blush than your bride—and that's why I often long to see you remain as you are, so that your filial affection may not be lessened by your passion as a husband."

"Well, since you wish it, mother, I will not speak to Mademoiselle Andree on the subject—still, silence will make me suffer—for it seems to me that silence is at times equivalent to an untruth."

"It was perhaps wrong of me to talk to you like that, my poor, dear Lucien! This emotion must tire you very much, and I will go away and let you sleep. If you feel worse, if you wake up even, call me and I will come. I will talk to you to prevent you from thinking too much and feeling sad."

"Go and rest, mother. You have been terribly worried to-day with all that has happened—I will try and sleep as well—and don't be anxious, I'm all right, I assure you."

Madame Despretz arranged his pillows and gave him a long, loving kiss on the forehead. Then she went into her own room, leaving the door open so that she might hear him if he called her during the night. Shortly after eleven o'clock he had a slight attack of fever, but the crisis was of short duration, and he fell asleep again until eight o'clock in the morning.

The dawn had risen brightly, and a beautiful summer's sun darted into the court-yard which Lucien's bedroom overlooked. Three sparrows were chirruping on the window-sill, when there came a loud ring at the bell and the young fellow woke up. Madame Despretz, who had gone to open the door, found that the visitor was Andrée Naviel, who threw her arms round her neck and kissed her, saying: "It's I. How is Lucien?"

"He has slept well, and in a couple of days he will be up and about again."

"Can one speak to him then?"

"Yes, certainly. The bell must have woke him up."

"Then I'm going to see him."

"Yes, do so, and meantime I'll light my fire."

Andrée entered the young man's room and approached the bedside. Without referring to their quarrel of the day before she asked: "Has your mother told you that I have narrowly escaped being killed?"

"You? Good heavens! what has happened?"

"Why, after that scoundrel struck you they kept me at Nana's house."

"Really! Then how have you managed to get away? How were you delivered?"

"By fire."

"Fire in Nana's house?"

"Yes, everything is destroyed, and that woman is probably ruined, for I heard that nothing was assured."

"And you were shut up in the house?"

"Quite so. I think they forgot me in the first moment of surprise. But I was saved by one of Nana's lovers—the rajah. We were almost swallowed up in the furnace, he and I. He took me in his arms and carried me at hap-hazard through the darkness, for the gas had gone out. At last we reached the fencing hall in a wing of the building which the fire hadn't caught. The rajah opened the window—it was on the first floor—and jumped out on to the ground. Soon afterward I saw him return with a ladder and so I was able to escape. Unfortunately, Lucien, I fear that all these gloomy adventures are the beginning of a series of misfortunes which I don't want you to share. I see plainly enough that the son of an honest woman can't marry Nana's daughter. And so I have come to give you back your liberty——"

"And it was to tell me that, that you came here Andrée?"

"No doubt. I thought it would be more loyal on my part not to allow you to foster hopes which can't be realized. I thought of all this last night. It is better that I should remain unmarried. No matter what husband, however humble and ill-favored he might be, would always have the right to reproach me with my origin."

"That's false, altogether false. What you say isn't worthy of you. Men are not so cowardly as you think. Sons and daughters are not taunted with their mother's faults nowadays; and if any one were sufficiently petty-minded or ill-advised to do so, no honest man would shake hands with him."

"You fancy that the world is better than it really is, Lucien."

"Besides, what does it matter to me? I am master of my heart. I love where, when, and whomsoever it pleases me."

"Believe me, Lucien, I have reflected and suffered a great deal. Some day or another prejudice would prove stronger than our happiness, and you would regret having been brave enough to marry a bad woman's daughter. Later on, you will understand me better; you will thank me and we shall be friends."

"Very well, Andrée, very well, you no longer wish to marry; so we will not marry; it's decided. The reason you give for the change in your ideas is of exaggerated delicacy, but I will take it as the real one and respect it."

"Those words imply a doubt which you scarcely take the trouble to disguise."

"Well, yes, I doubt; yes, I suffer; yes, I do not believe, I cannot believe, that such a motive would suffice for you to annihilate our hopes. Don't you realize that you are condemning me to death?"

"Ah! you make me very unhappy by insisting like that, since I tell you that I am unworthy of you!"

"That cannot be. Besides I consider that I am the only good judge on that point. If you broke off our engagement I should not think you were unworthy of me, I should think that you loved the rajah or the marquis — and then I don't know what I should do; I should become a madman, a murderer, everything. What should I care for life and honor without you?"

"Really? You could really imagine that I broke off our engagement because I didn't love you. Ungrateful fellow! I wish I had the courage to let you think so. You would forget me and become happy — and I, I could die without causing you any grief.

"You love me still! That is the only point I understand of everything I have heard. You haven't any longer the right to come and say to me, 'I have reflected.' *I* don't reflect, I wait for you, long for you ardently, for all my heart goes toward you,

my darling Andrée, my dream of bliss. Ah! I shall stop up my eyes and ears; I shall refuse to look at obstacles, or listen to reasons. You are Nana's daughter, you say? Well, what of that? You might be Nana herself, and yet I should marry you all the same, to rescue you and to purify you, to wipe away from your lips every stain of venal kisses, until you became an angel after being a demon, you dear little darling of my heart! And if you had need of it, my respect and love for you would raise you up so high, that even if you had been cast into the mud, you would stand upon so lofty a pedestal that only the birds of heaven would be able to caress you.' Andrée, Andrée, in spite of yourself, in spite of everything, you must be my wife."

"You will repent of not listening to my advice, Lucien. I was quite right in refusing to marry. You will repent of it I tell you. I am weak and I yield to your entreaties. We will marry since you are bent on it. But I shall never forgive you if ever you address me a reproach."

"Ah, Andrée, you give way at last! What reproaches could I ever address to you? Do you take me for a coward, darling? I am going to get up now, for I'm cured and I feel almost strong——"

"Then I will leave you to dress, Lucien; besides I must go home."

"Without having kissed me?"

She approached her lover, who was holding out his arms, and offered him her forehead as had been her wont since the outset of their engagement. But he nervously clasped her round the shoulders, in a transport of sudden passion, and as she half drew back in surprise he began by timidly kissing her at the corner of her pretty mouth. She stiffened herself, averting her head with a little sensual laugh; but although she sought to avoid it, Lucien's lips growing bolder and bolder gave her so long and near a kiss that she was obliged to return it, if only to make him cease. Madame Despretz who had heard Andrée's laugh appeared on the threshold of the room, and stood there watching them with a sorrowful expression. Then with a sad smile she stammered in a broken voice: "Oh! what children!"

As Andrée perceived Lucien's mother she became very red and still more charming, with her green eyes sparkling under the tangled golden curls which cast a shadow on her brow. She at once freed herself from her lover's embrace, kissed Madame Despretz, glanced at the looking-glass to set her straw hat, decked with roses, straight again, and then tripped rapidly away.

CHAPTER XXXII.

ANDRÉE followed the Boulevard Mazas as far as the Pont d'Austrelitz, crossed the Seine, and entered the Jardin des Plantes, which she meant to traverse diagonally, so as to reach the starting point of the omnibus line to Batignolles. As she passed in front of the elephan house she noticed a foreigner, who wore a turban like the rajah, and who was of about the same height. She was walking very fast, but on perceiving this foreigner, who was regaling a superb Bengal elephant with some cakes, she involuntarily slackened her pace. The animal seemed to divine a compatriot in the turbaned stranger, and gave unequivocal signs of sympathy. A perfect dialogue was being carried on between them, the man speaking in Hindu and the elephant showing by his manner that he fully understood him. Andrée recognized the rajah's voice before she was able to distinguish his features; but she was about to pass by without speaking to him, when, hearing the sound of her footsteps on the gravel, he turned his head and saw her. He at once stepped forward, and a cordial smile lit up his manly face. "God is with me since he has allowed me to see you again," he said in a soft, caressing voice, the tone of which was so sincere that Andrée felt drawn toward him by sister-like confidence.

"I feel very happy," she answered, "that chance has furnished me with an opportunity of thanking you; for it is to you that I owe both my liberty and my life."

"Who was keeping you a prisoner in that house?"

"The Marquis D'Albigny,"

"He? By what right?"

"His mistress is my mother."

"Nana your mother! Is it possible? Can the flower be the child of the dungheap?"

"Why do you talk like that of a woman you have loved?"

"I did not know her, and I had not seen you. There is as much difference between her and you as between a beacon and a star."

"But Nana could love you as she loves, whereas I am not free."

"Yes, I know it; her lover wished to kill your friend. You despise that man, and you do rightly. But I — I shall not try to kill your friend. Since you love him, I shall love him also."

"You have a golden heart, rajah."

"If it were golden you would be wealthy, for it belongs to you. And yet I do not know even your name. It must be as soft as a nightingale's song in the month of May."

"My name is Andrée."

"Andrée! Andrée! do I pronounce it right? Have I really

the proper accent when I call you Andrée?" And in an undertone he repeated, with soft, Oriental modulations, "Andrée! Andrée!"

There was a pause, and they walked on slowly side by side for some little time without speaking. They were following one of the broad avenues leading to the quay. The sky was dark, and an early autumn breeze blew down the vaulted paths, tearing off the leaves which had already began to fade. The cedars of the labyrinth swayed to and fro like large, black fans against the slate-gray sky, across which a number of low clouds were sweeping. In the direction of the aviary, one could hear the cackling and screeching of the tropical birds; and from further off came the roar of the lions who were pacing up and down in front of their iron bars, pausing from time to time to sniff the air and yawn. On the Seine, the whistling of the penny steamboats and the prolonged signals of the tugs vibrated amid the gusts of wind which were blowing the black smoke of the factory chimneys eastward. Drops of rain were just beginning to fall when Andrée and the rajah reached the edge of the labyrinth, and as neither of them had an umbrella, they sought a refuge under the cedar of Lebanon at the foot of the belvedere. The shower was of short duration, being suddenly swept away by a perfect hurricane which roared amid the trees of the garden, frantically swaying the lofty branches to and fro. And as the blast swept along, it carried away with it a flight of rooks who were cawing loudly.

"Will you not come nearer?" said the rajah to Andrée in an undertone; "I am tall enough to shield you from the wind. My mantle was not made for this rainy climate, no doubt, and yet if you would pass it around you, you would feel much warmer."

"Thank you, rajah; I am not cold."

"Tell me, how does it happen that Nana is your mother?"

"I don't know; I don't even know my father's name; but what I do know is that when I was a child she abandoned me to public charity. I was brought up and adopted by good people the working classes, who taught me to earn my living and love honesty. As for my mother, now that she is certain that I am the child she abandoned, she merely wants to take me back with her for some infamous purpose."

"Andrée, you must never return to that house again."

"The fire has delivered me from it."

"The fire and I."

"That is true. Forgive me; I owe my life to you."

"And I — I owe you all that I possess. Listen, Andrée, would you like to become rich?"

"Why do you ask me that?"

"Because I am in France, and shall stay there. I love Paris

more than ever since meeting you. And yet the climate of Europe is mortal for the tiger and mortal for the rajah also. Let me love you with ideal love. I ask nothing more than your friendship. I will be the friend of those that love you, and I shall not be jealous of the man you marry. From time to time I will go to see you and listen to you; that will suffice. My love is deep but patient, for it is eternal. You will be your lover's in this world and mine in the world to come. Shall it be so?"

"I accept your friendship, for I have confidence in you; but why do you ask me if I wish to be rich?"

"Because I am alone in the world, and soon, when I return to my father in the stars, I will make you happy by leaving you my fortune — for your children."

"But if the climate of France does not agree with you, rajah, you ought to go away. I could not accept your fortune if you committed suicide so as to leave it to me."

"If I left France, I should die all the sooner. I need the sunlight; but happiness is the sunlight of the heart, and, without you, I should now be walking in the dark. Let me love you without even telling it. My love shall be at once so deep and so high that no one will divine it. You alone will know that the Hindu's soul hangs on your golden hair. And keep this secret, that it may be between you and I."

"Willingly, rajah; for if I acknowledged that we had talked together for so long a time, people would imagine something contrary to truth, and the friend who loves me would think that I had been false to him."

"If he lacks confidence in you, Andrée, he does not love you as you deserve to be loved."

The rain had now ceased falling, and as the slate-gray clouds swept by in fragments toward the horizon, large patches of azure became visible overhead. The old cedars swayed to and fro, shaking their damp mantles over the lawns, and rearing their arms amid the gale.

"Good-bye, prince," said Andrée to the rajah.

"When shall I see you again?"

"Oh, we can meet but seldom; for people must not suppose that I am faithless to my lover — though that never will be true."

"I will come whenever you please. The more often I see you, the longer I shall live. The less I see you the sooner you will become rich!"

"Come and buy some flowers of my parents."

"Yes; I will say that they are for my mistress. You alone, Andrée, you alone will know that I come for you, the ideal mistress of my life. Go on your way now; I shall tarry here. I shall come here every day, to the same spot, at the same hour.

If you need a friend you will find me here; or, if you prefer it, write to me—here is my card. I shall go and see you soon. Now, however, I shall never be alone, never without you; for the sparkle of your eyes, the glow of your golden hair, your whole being is *there*—on my heart! You may leave me, but I hold your image in my heart and brain forever."

"*Au revoir*, Andrée."

"*Au revoir*, prince."

With figure and head erect, she tripped lightly along the avenue, followed by a sun-ray which darted after her over the gravel, lighting up her golden hair, and lending a brighter red to her budding lips. An hour later she reached home.

Madame Naviel was waiting for her adoptive daughter in the work-room, but Naviel himself had gone off to work at the foundry, as if he had spent the night in his bed. As soon as Andrée entered, Madame Naviel rose up, took her by the hand, and led her into the parlor. "You have probably learned the truth about your birth, Andrée," she began. "Besides, I intended to tell you about it. You are not my daughter——" She stopped short, for the sobs were stifling her. "I fetched you," she resumed at last, "from the hospital where your real mother, Nana, abandoned you. I brought you up as well as I could, and I've taught you an honest calling by which you can earn your living. But Naviel and I, we don't want to hurt your feelings. Stay with us if your heart tells you to do so, or go with your real mother as she wishes to take you back. I don't want to influence you in the least. Don't think of gratitude or duty in deciding. Don't stay with us unless it pleases you. When we took you, we wanted to make you happy. So think the matter ever and decide."

"I have decided, mother."

"I am very grateful to you, Andrée, for still calling me by that name of mother, which I have almost a right to."

"To which you alone have a right, and that is why I intend to stay with you."

"You make me very glad, dear; but I did not expect less from you. Your heart is better than your head, for if I am not mistaken you had no serious reason for going to that woman's yesterday."

"Excuse me, mother, I had; but it's all over now, so we won't speak of it. My marriage with Lucien is decided."

"Ah! I was very much afraid last night that I should never see you again, my poor little Andrée; and Naviel thought so too. When he heard that you were shut up in that house, he rushed off like a madman. It seems that he almost strangled the marquis. He has such a strong arm, you know, and if he struck that fellow D'Albigny, he must have made him feel it.

From what I understood last night, it was one of Nana's lovers who saved you."

"Yes, an Indian prince, who ruined himself for her once already, and who has come back to France with a fresh fortune. He had left all his securities in that woman's room. But, thanks to me, he recovered them, and I don't fancy that Nana will ever see the rajah's fortune again."

"Why is that?"

"Because she showed him too openly that she only cared for him for the sake of his millions. And now he despises her as much as he used to love her."

"Ah! my girl, all those folks are not worth much, and you act for the best in remaining with us. There is nothing like marrying a man one esteems, and leading a happy family life. Since I married Naviel, I have grown old without noticing it; he has always been most affectionate to me, and I have always tried to give him a pleasant home. It is only right that he shouldn't have any worry after a hard day's work; and so, whenever I have been troubled about money matters or the like, I have always kept it to myself, and Naviel has been able to sleep quietly. Do you see, my girl, a good husband is worth all the treasures in the world."

At this moment Madame Naviel was interrupted by a loud ring at the bell, and, a minute later, Margot knocked at the parlor door. "Come in," called Andrée.

The door opened, and the work-girl threw herself at her young mistress' feet and began to sob aloud. "Ah! mademoiselle," she stammered, "it's a man dressed like a footman; but I recognize him well enough; he belongs to the police. It was he who arrested me on the day of the review. He wants to speak to you, he says, but I am almost sure that he has come here for me."

"This doesn't smell pleasant," muttered Madame Naviel, and she told Margot to go with her into the work-room.

"Don't be alarmed, mother," said Andrée, who was very calm. "Have the man shown in here. He must be our friend since he owes his life to my father."

As soon as Andrée was alone, Luc entered the room, carrying his hat, which was decked with a blue cockade, in his hand. "I have come, Mademoiselle Andrée," he said, with a tragi-comical gravity, "to warn you that Monsieur Naviel's peace and liberty are seriously threatened by my rascally master, the so-called Marquis D'Albigny, though maybe he has stolen his name like everything else."

"But how can this man threaten my father?"

"He threatens to ruin Monsieur Naviel's reputation as an honest man. He will accuse him of everything, of having robbed,

of having set the place on fire, and of having tried to strangle him. On the last point it's difficult to say the contrary."

Andrée turned pale. "What is to be done?" she asked.

"Yes, that's the question. I have come on behalf of the marquis and Nana, who are both stopping at a hotel, waiting for an apartment to be furnished for them. The horses, the carriages, the ground and the ruins are all going to be sold. It is a bad blow for them, and I fancy that they rely on you to help them to raise their heads again. At all events, this is what they have instructed me to tell you. If you will go and live with them, they will leave Monsieur Naviel in peace; but otherwise, the Marquis D'Albigny will send a complaint to the public prosecutor charging Naviel with assaulting and even with attempted murder. You see, my poor Mademoiselle Andrée, that the prospect isn't a pleasant one."

"Well, if the marquis charges my father, my lover will charge *him*."

"Excuse me, mademoiselle, but in both cases the marquis has the law on his side. In the first case, your lover was struck and injured by the marquis, that's certain; but Monsieur Despretz was the first to raise his arm, and the affair took place in the marquis' house. So D'Albigny can say that it was a case of legitimate defense. Now, Monsieur Naviel also struck the first blow, and his position is all the more serious as there is no proof of your having been treated with violence. Besides, I have an idea that an attempt will be made to ruin Monsieur Naviel's reputation for honesty, and the presumptions will be against him. Well, what do you decide?"

"I cannot and will not return to that woman's."

"So be it, Andrée, you are quite right. Forgive me for speaking to you so familiarly. You don't know what I am, of course. And I myself, I didn't know it until a few weeks ago; and yet I always felt my heart beat whenever I saw you. Nature can't be controlled, mademoiselle. The Naviels are only your adoptive parents. Nana is your mother! She showed it you, and no mistake; and whether you like it or not, you are nevertheless Mademoiselle Nana. But you would never guess whose fault it is?"

"No, certainly not."

"Well, the man to blame is the old mountebank, Face-to-Smack, as he once called himself, Luc, as he is styled nowadays, the fellow who changes his name like his shirt. For to tell the truth, mademoiselle, I am your father!"

"What, you?"

"Yes. A long time ago I was the lover of the woman whose servant I now am. That was nearly twenty years ago! It happened just as I tell you, and the strange thing is that she doesn't know me now. She has had so many lovers in her time;

and I have changed so much, that she doesn't recognize me at all. It's only natural. Well, if I confess all this to you — it is of no use disguising the truth — it is because I feel certain that your marriage won't come off."

"What reason have you to think that? As you pretend to be my father you will perhaps consent to tell me."

"No, unfortunately I can't tell you my reasons — for a woman's honor is in question. But isn't it enough for you to know that your mother is Nana and that your father is a scamp. You don't know what I've been up to in my time. You see me now with a livery on my back — you saw me once dressed like a police agent — and the fact is I still belong to the force, and I was simply sent to Nana's to play the spy on her. You knew me, too, when I was a mountebank, and you pitied me when you saw me smacked on the face and kicked behind. But you never knew me as a thief! And yet it's true! I've been a thief, and I narrowly missed being a murderer also! Yes, I've tried to murder, I've robbed, and I've spied, and what's more, it was I who set fire to Nana's house — yes I, Luc! And now if you don't think that honest folks ought to despise me, well, you must be difficult!"

"Why do you tell me all this, if you are my father?"

"Why, little one? Because I know you; you would never impose such a tie of relationship on your lover, Lucien Despretz, and so you will break off the engagement. Besides, it must be done. Listen to me. I am a great blackguard, but I love you. I haven't a penn'orth of honesty under my skin, but I have treasures of love for you in my heart! No, I've no ill feeling against that young fellow, not at all. Quite on the contrary! I should like to see you happy together, but it's impossible, do you hear — impossible?"

"I don't believe you, no, I don't believe you. One thing or the other: either you are lying when you say that you have murdered, robbed, and committed arson — and in that case you must have some very strong motive to lie, and then one lie more or less wouldn't matter; or else you tell the truth when you charge yourself with all these misdeeds, and in that case, being capable of everything you are certainly not incapable of lying. So I don't believe you, you are not my father. You, D'Albigny, and Nana, you are all leagued together to deceive me and entrap me!"

"What! can you think such a thing of me? It's abominable! What! you won't believe that I tried to kill Nana, and that I only succeeded in bleeding her gorilla? And yet it's true enough. I went into her room during the night. I wanted to save you from her as I want to save you still. Didn't I encourage you to resist their threats and orders?"

"But you oppose my marriage with Monsieur Despretz just as they do. Why do you do that, I ask, by what right?"

"Why? Because this marriage would be the crowning blow! Because you would be up to your neck in abomination if it came off! But I see that you don't believe me, when I tell you that I'm your father! Ah! there, now I'm crying like a fool—but it's all true, all true. I'm a scamp, no doubt, but I have been more unfortunate than guilty. However, there's one woman I hate, your mother, who drove me away before you were born. I've tried to kill her twice already, let her look out for the third time. At all events, I've beggared them, or nearly so—she and her marquis. It's the beginning of the end. I've crawled into their life like a worm into an apple, to eat them up, and I'll do it too. But it's getting late, mademoiselle, and I must be going now."

"I thank you for coming to put me on my guard by telling me that the Marquis D'Albigny was about to make a charge against my adoptive father. The rest is of little moment."

"I have done my best, little Andrée, to shield you from harm, you and those you love, and I'll do the same as long as I have a drop of blood left in my veins—as I did at the fête of St. Cloud when I treated D'Albigny and that woman so roughly, as you may perhaps remember. Ah! they cut a pretty figure, both of them, when I showed up that bet of his with the Hercules, and when I reminded her that she had been my mistress. I began my little scheme of vengeance then, and nowadays I've worked it out—not completely, but the end will soon come now. It was on that same day at St. Cloud that I first protected you, my little Andrée, and began to love you. And now I protect you still and love you more than ever. Oh! I know very well that you can't love me in return. I'm ugly, wicked and jealous, and I'm a lacky into the bargain. I have plied every low calling in my time. So I won't complain, but I'm none the less your father, and I shall watch those who want to harm you. And now I'm going."

He took two steps toward the door and then returned: "Do you remember," he asked, "how I asked you to let me kiss you—that evening in the park, when I left you on coming out of the wrestling-booth? There was a dealer, I remember, who had baited a line with bits of gingerbread which the urchins tried to swallow; and a two-storied round-about, where three or four big girls were showing their ankles. It was long ago, no doubt, but it seems to me as if it were only yesterday. Ah! you were a little girl then, and you were not ashamed to kiss the clown; but nowadays it's all very well for me to call you my daughter, my little Andrée, it's as if I tried to play the *Marseillaise* with a syringe. But no matter, I love you all the same.

And now I'm going for good, remember me to Monsieur Naviel. We were in the fire together."

He walked to the parlor door and stopped short to gaze at Andrée. The sun was shining again; and a bright ray darted through the French window, playing over the young girl's figure. The radiance enhanced her beauty. Below her hair caught up in plaits, the sunlight darted upon her shell-like ears, lending them a roseate transparency. The bright tinge which the blood of youth imparted to her cheeks was softened near her mouth, where lips, dimples and chin, seemingly modeled by Cupid's fingers, united in a smile. With her Grecian profile, her forehead veiled by curly hair, her straight little nose with its mobile nostrils, her sensual mouth, her admirably proportioned figure, her firm, full bosom, her gracefully-curved hips, her rounded knees revealed by her tight skirt, her tiny feet and her velvety hands with delicate wrists, Andrée was a perfect type of feminine beauty in its early splendor. Luc fell on his knees before this apparition of youth, and dragging himself to her feet, he cried amid his sobs: "Oh! Andree, my little Andrée, my daughter, let me kiss but the edge of your skirt. Paternal love purifies everything, even a father's infamy, even a mother's shame. As I look at you now it seems to me that I can see your mother as she was when I first knew her." Then, in a delirious transport he kissed Andrée's dress, laughing and crying at the same time. But at last, rising to his feet again, he darted down the stairs and out of the house, like a criminal flying from justice.

That same evening M. Naviel did not return home at the usual hour, and his wife, who had dinner ready, was greatly surprised by his non-appearance. Andrée on her side was not so much astonished as alarmed, for she had experienced cruel anguish since her interview with Luc. His strange language and sudden fits of tenderness had made her think that he was somewhat deranged in his mind. In the old times when he was known as Face-to-Smack she had looked upon him as a poor, persecuted fellow, who submitted to all treatment like a beaten dog. But now her opinion had changed, and it seemed to her as if he were bent upon revenging himself, at the risk of harming even innocent people. She must beware of him, she thought, despite his fulsom language, for by his own showing he had grown wicked and furious, and did not shrink from committing crimes. On the other hand, in his statements respecting Monsieur Naviel, he might certainly have been guided by a consciousness of the truth; and so, when Andrée saw that her adoptive father did not return home at the usual hour, she became exceedingly anxious — so anxious, indeed, that she dared not speak to Madame Naviel for fear of alarming her. Indeed, she contrived to assume an air of indifference, and soon declared that she had

to go out on some pressing matter connected with her work. But once outside the house she hailed a cab and drove straight to the factory where Naviel was employed. It was almost nine o'clock when she got there. The managers were away, and she only found a foreman on guard. "You want to know what has become of Pierre Naviel, who works here?" he said brutally in answer to her inquiries.

"Yes, sir."

"Well, he's in prison, my beauty."

"In prison?"

"Yes, in prison, as I tell you."

"But why?"

"For having committed a robbery last night, in a house which was on fire."

"That's false!"

"Well, I only repeat what I was told. The affair made enough row in the factory this afternoon; but after all it doesn't concern me. However, it's hardly likely that he would have been arrested without cause. There's no fire without smoke, my girl."

"Where was he taken?"

"To the commissary's, and he is probably there still."

A fresh idea suddenly occurred to Andrée. M. D'Albigny had no doubt accused Pierre Naviel of stealing the securities belonging to the rajah, and the latter alone could prove the mechanic's innocence, by stating that these securities were his property, and that he had saved them himself. Andrée recollected that the rajah had given her his address that very morning. So she felt for his card in her pocket and then hastened to the Grand Hotel where the Hindu was staying. He received her immediately. "I was thinking of you, Andrée," he said. "What brings you here—happiness or misfortune?"

"Misfortune."

"Tell me what it is, then. Confide in your friend. If I have to shed my blood on your behalf I will do so gladly. Tell me where I am to go and whom I have to fight."

"I have come to ask for your testimony."

"You cannot require me to speak aught but the truth. Tell me what you wish and I will obey you."

"My adoptive father is accused of having stolen your securities from Nana's bedroom last night. Now, as you are well aware, you recovered them yourself."

"Quite so. I have them in a portfolio here."

"Your testimony on the point will suffice to ensure my adoptive father's release."

"Let us start, then, I have a brougham at my orders until midnight, and I will have the horse put to at once." So saying,

he rang the bell, and when a servant appeared he exclaimed: "I wish my brougham to be got ready immediately."

The man withdrew, and the rajah then passed into his dressing-room, leaving Andrée momentarily alone. She felt very happy at the prospect of being able to effect her adoptive father's release at once, thanks to the rajah's evidence. She recalled the many proofs of kindness which M. Naviel had given her. Her real father could not have brought her up with deeper affection or more abnegation and delicacy than this honest man, who had made her an industrious girl with virtuous principles, fittingly armed for the great struggle of work *versus* vicious idleness, in which so many young women exposed to temptation, succumb, either through undue coquetry or lack of courage. Andrée experienced also a feeling of vivid generous joy at the thought that she was likewise about to spare her good mother, Madame Naviel, a terrible emotion. The rajah was soon ready and joined Andrée, who now noticed that he had greatly changed since the morning. There was an expression of suffering upon his features, his lips had a twinge of bitter resignation, and his eyes, which seemed larger than usual, shone with a deep, calm brilliancy.

"You look ill, prince," said Andrée.

"I am ill, dear soul of my life; I spat blood this afternoon, and I think that I shall die here in Paris. I can feel a slow fire consuming me, here in the chest."

At this moment the servant returned and announced that the brougham was waiting. Andrée gave the address of the station-house where M. Naviel was, in all probability, still detained, and they started off. In half an hour's time they had reached the outer boulevard, and the vehicle drew up in front of a door above which was a red lamp, bearing this inscription in white letters, "Commissary of Police." The rajah offered Andrée his hand to assist her in alighting, and his arm to conduct her down a narrow passage which led to a steep and dimly-lighted staircase. The commissary's offices were on the first floor. A little vestibule conducted into a first room where the magistrate's secretary was stationed, and where two detectives sat smoking on a bench in a dark corner, while a policeman in uniform walked up and down in front of a closed door. Andrée felt terribly oppressed as she entered this dingy room, which was most inadequately lighted by a smoky lamp hanging from the ceiling.

"What is your business?" asked the secretary, curtly.

"I have come," said Andrée, "for my adoptive father, Monsieur Naviel, who is accused, it seems, of having stolen some securities in a fire, last night.

She could say no more, for her emotion was stifling her; and so it was the rajah who continued, "The securities in question

belong to me," he said. "I had left them with the owner of the house in virtue of a verbal agreement between us. Almost all of them are nominative securities and bear my name and title. I can easily prove my identity. Besides, I have the securities with me." And thereupon the rajah produced his portfolio.

"I must confess to you, prince," said the secretary, politely, "that the information we have obtained concerning Pierre Naviel is quite in his favor, while the reports of our agents concerning his accuser, the Marquis D'Albigny, are just the reverse. The prefecture of police, for instance, has sent us the report of a detective, which is most damaging for the marquis, and I am only waiting for my superior's return — he was called away a couple of hours ago—to have Pierre Naviel set at liberty. I expect the commissary back every minute, and, perhaps, you will kindly wait for him in his office. Only I must tell you that there is a second affair grafted on the first one."

"What affair?" asked Andrée, eagerly experiencing every form of anxiety with astonishing rapidity.

"It is a question of a girl named Margot, who states that she is employed by you."

"That's true," rejoined Andrée. "She is the best of my rose-mounters."

"Well, she came to ask us to keep her instead of your relative, and as, naturally enough, we couldn't grant her request, she began to insult us in such a manner that we were obliged to lock her up. When the commissary returns he will decide whether he can release her, or whether she ought to be prosecuted for her violent behavior."

"Margot is a spoiled child, destitute of education and legal knowledge," replied Andrée. "She is so devoted to me that when I experience the slightest mishap she becomes infuriated. So it is not astonishing if she used abusive language when you told her that you could not accept her sacrifice."

Shortly afterward the commissary of police returned. "You can set Pierre Naviel at liberty," he said to his secretary; and then he muttered between his teeth: "that Marquis D'Albigny is evidently an arrant scamp."

He seemed to be in a very bad humor — perhaps on account of the marquis, or perhaps because he was wet; for it had been raining during the last quarter of an hour. He deposited his umbrella in a corner of the office and took off his overcoat, while Naviel was being set at liberty. Andrée darted toward her adoptive father, and rising on tiptoe, threw her arms around his brown neck and kissed him on either cheek. Then mindful of poor Margot, she approached the commissary, and said to him: "You are detaining, sir, a work-girl of mine, who is rather thoughtless at times, but who is most devoted to me — so devoted, indeed, that on hearing of my father's arrest, she came

here and asked to be allowed to take his place. Your secretary could not accept her proposal, and it seemed that she used some very strong language. But pray be lenient, sir, I promise you that this shan't occur again."

"What did this girl say?" asked the commissary of his subordinate.

"Nothing of very great moment, sir. We mainly detained her in order to give her a lesson."

"Very good. Have her brought here."

The door of a cell to which Margot had been provisionally consigned was opened and she entered the office, still somewhat flushed by her recent anger, and with brilliant eyes and untidy hair. "Was it you who ventured to insult my subordinates?" asked the commissary, sternly.

Margot would have made some violent rejoinder, but at a sign from Andrée she lowered her head and remained silent. "I advise you not to begin again," resumed the commissary; "your friends would intercede for you to no purpose, for I should send you to the prefecture and you would be brought before the tribunal of correctional police. I will let you off this time, but be careful in future."

On reaching the street the rajah offered Andrée his hand and bade her good-by, saying: "You have no further need of me, so I will leave you with your father. Be happy!"

"I shall go to thank you with my wife, sir," said Naviel. "My daughter has just told me of all that I owe you."

"There is only one way of thanking me," rejoined the Hindu, "and that is to treat me as a friend, and allow me to go and see you."

"We shall feel deeply honored, sir," replied the mechanic.

"And I shall be very happy," sighed the rajah, as he sprang quickly into his brougham.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A FORTNIGHT after the fire which destroyed the mansion near the Parc Monceau, Nana went to reside on the first floor of a house in the Rue de Moscou. The suite of rooms she had engaged was freshly painted and papered, and then speedily furnished, for her upholsterers allowed her six months' credit. D'Albigny, on his side, engaged an *entresol** in the same house. With the

* The *entresol* is really the first floor in modern Parisian houses, but the rooms are invariably low, all available height and display being reserved for the story overhead, which is commonly called "the first above the *entresol*." Strictly speaking, therefore, Nana lived on the second floor and D'Albigny on the first one.—TRANS.

exception of Luc and Virginie, Nana dismissed all her servants, cooks, footmen and coachmen, at the same time selling all her horses and carriages. The fall was complete. The furniture and the mansion she had lost by the fire had never been insured, and for the first time D'Albigny's audacity had proved at fault. The ground and the charred remnants of the house were sold like the equipages, and the whole realized some eight hundred and fifty thousand francs; but Nana merely pocketed half a million, for D'Albigny, who carried out all the arrangements, continued to deceive her as to the real amount he obtained for the property. Under the pretext that she knew nothing about business, and that figures made her head ache, she signed whatever the marquis laid before her, and did not take the trouble to go over his accounts, With her invested funds she still possessed a couple of millions of francs; but she began to dread poverty, and became as parsimonious as she had been prodigal in days gone by.

D'Albigny then tried some bold strokes on 'change, but his ventures were unlucky ones, and in three months' time he lost three quarters of what remained to his accomplice. The winter went by, spring returned again, and in April the bill which Nana had given to her upholsterers fell due. D'Albigny had made arrangements with some unscrupulous firms who had paid him a commission of fifteen thousand francs, cash, on Nana signing bills for fifty thousand; the furniture supplied to her being worth barely more than half of that amount. On the eve of the settling day Nana scarcely had five hundred napoleons before her; so she called on the upholsterers and asked them to renew her bill. They declined to do so, but offered to take back the furniture, valuing it at just one-half of the original price; Nana flew into a rage, not unnaturally; called the dealers a pack of Jews, and returned home to write a note to the Prince of Mulhausen. "My little Mulhausen," she said, "I am giving a little soirée in my rooms to-night. You are fond of music, I believe. I shall have a famous pianist from your country, and two or three vocalists of mine. Come and hear them, we will make a great ado about nothing. Your very, very old friend, NANA."

Mulhausen arrived in evening dress, irreproachably elegant, strongly scented, and with his mustaches waxed into formidable points. But he found Nana alone; and he looked so frightened when Luc ushered him into the room that she could not help laughing at him. Although he had been half ruined by her in the days of her opulence he was in reality very avaricious, and since the the fire he had seldom visited her. He scented a snare in the tête-à-tête interview which she had now prepared, for there was not even the shadow of a piano in her new drawing-room, which was simply furnished in the Louis Quinze style and hung with Aubusson tapestry. Her greeting was most cordial,

and indeed she began to flatter, coax and wheedle him at once. This was all the more extraordinary as in past times she had treated him as a buffoon, and had never once shown him such marked favor as she now displayed.

"You must see by my dress, my dear fellow," she began, "that I don't expect any other guest than you. Not even D'Albigny. Will you have a cigarette?" And ringing the bell, she ordered Luc to serve some tea.

Mulhausen had accepted the cigarette with sullen resignation. Nana's engaging manners smelled strongly of borrowing, and the prince's instinct warned him that he had been drawn into a trap. By a stock broker, who belonged to the same club as himself, he had already heard about D'Albigny's losses on 'change, and since then he had very seldom met the marquis. He had even made bold enough to declare before a number of people at the Café Riche that D'Albigny had become a compromising acquaintance. As for Nana, he found her very changed, extremely aged, in his opinion, and he decided that the great courtesan was only the shadow of her former self. The fact is that anxiety had silvered a few of the golden hairs which Mulhausen would have paid five napoleons apiece for in the days when his acquaintance with Nana flattered his vanity as a woman-killer. But since she had sold her equipages, and dismissed her retinue, she was, in his estimation, only an ordinary harlot whom a man could treat without the slightest ceremony.

"My dear fellow," she said, as she poured him out a cup of tea, "you find me in a wretched hole here."

"I have been here before," interrupted Mulhausen, sullenly.

"Yes, I know that, and I am grateful for your kindness; but remember it is a mere moment of transition and nothing more. We have exchanged vows, the rajah and I, and very shortly I shall return to my old style."

Mulhausen parried the thrust at once. "I have heard it said that the rajah is in love with a Mademoiselle Naviel who has the reputation of being your daughter, and who, by the way, is rather like you were some years ago. Folks even add that the rajah is wasting away because the girl is going to marry another suitor who had the first start.

"I see that you are fully acquainted with my family affairs, prince. They couldn't be in better hands, and the proof is ——"

"This tea is excellent, my dear Nana, but your cups are of almost common china. What has become of your old Sèvres? And look at that furniture! How can you think of receiving people who respect themselves in such an apartment as this? How many rooms have you got here?"

"Ten in all. Two drawing-rooms, a dining-room, a library, a dressing-room, a bath-room, and four bedrooms. Then there are the servants' rooms upstairs, but Virginie sleeps here. I have never liked to be alone at night-time since the day my gorilla was killed while I was asleep. I have grown almost timid. But then you know one is always a woman in some respects."

"Ah! so much the better," said Mulhausen, heaving a sigh, and, having finished his cup of tea, he rose up in brutal haste.

"What! are you going?" asked Nana, in surprise.

"Yes, there's a little dance at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and I am expected there."

Nana rose to her feet and approached Mulhausen. Seized with a vague apprehension, he glanced behind him and saw her eyes burning with feverish energy. If she did not succeed in galvanizing the prince, in conquering his Teutonic coldness and kindling a spark of passion in his fatty heart, she might set him down as lost for good. He would surely never return to her again. So rising on tip-toe, and throwing her arms around his neck, she looked into his eyes with the seductive feline power of fascination she possessed, letting a sort of disturbing magnetic warmth filter between her black lashes which were partly lowered. As she stood there in this attitude, the serpentine voluptuous grace of her bosom and loins became fully apparent. Her undulating hair sparkled more brilliantly in the radiance of the blue crystal chandelier, her soft, fleshy hands, on which two sapphires gleamed, were clasped behind his neck, and her mouth, the voluptuous raillery of which had still a strange attraction, murmured carressingly, with that coaxing tenderness which she alone knew how to assume to conquer a virile will: "Come why are you going? I am alone, I am still beautiful, and well disposed toward you. Why are you going, I ask? Leave your ministry alone! I was sometimes unkind to you, and we have never been happy together. You have spent money on me out of vanity while others spent it out of love, and I was greatly vexed at that. In fact it was for that reason that I amused myself in teasing you. But now I want to reward you for all your trouble, and console you for all my naughtiness. We are alone, so stay with me. In reality I have never cared for any one but you, and that was why I resisted the advances you so seldom made. I did not want you to be what the others were. You had a place in my heart — the place one reserves for the friend one looks and longs for — a little dear and secret corner! All that which has been forbidden you so far, shall be yours now and yours alone, my prince. I have never seen a man who better deserved that beautiful title which women so much admire."

Mulhausen remained frigid. "I can't give you this evening," he stammered, "I will return another day."

"No, not another day; stay this evening. I might perhaps be dead to-morrow, and you as well, Mulhausen."

"It is impossible for me to remain with you, Nana; I have given a promise and I must keep it." And he added cruelly, "A charming woman is expecting me."

"In that case, my dear fellow," said Nana, sinking back into her arm-chair, "I won't detain you. Go where charming women await yôu; I have only some advice to ask of you and then you shall be free."

"Some advice about what?"

"About two thousand napoleons which I have to pay to-morrow, although I have barely a quarter of the amount by me."

"Obtain an advance on your securities or other property if you have any."

"But D'Albigny has absolutely ruined me; all my bonds have gone in stock exchange transactions. I certainly have some house property worth five hundred thousand francs left, but between now and to-morrow I haven't time to borrow forty thousand francs on it. The formalities would require two or three days, and besides, they are distasteful to me."

"Pawn your jewelry, then."

"But that means misery,"

"What can't be cured must be endured," said Mulhausen shrugging his shoulders.

"But couldn't you lend me the amount I need?" asked Nana.

"I haven't got it—not even the quarter of the sum. I have bled myself in every limb for your sake, my beauty, and now I'm quite used up. This is all I can do for you." And taking five napoleons out of his trouser pocket, Mulhausen laid them in the saucer of Nana's teacup.

An angry flush spread over the courtesan's cheeks, and springing to her feet she flung cup, saucer and gold in the prince's face. The tea rained down his white shirt-front, and he stood dripping, utterly confounded by the sudden assault, while Nana imperiously rang the bell.

"Bring this gentleman's hat and overcoat," she said to Luc.

"The gentleman's hat," grumbled Luc as he returned to the ante-room. "He looks in a nice state, that German, with his mustaches curved like fish-hooks! Hum, I don't think that Nana has made much by her angling to-night."

Bringing the prince's hat and overcoat, which had been deposited on a bench in the ante-room, Luc silently helped him on with them. Mulhausen was soon ready, and he then held out his hand to Nana, but she turned her back upon him and pointing to the gold coins strewed on the carpet: "Give the

prince these coppers," she said to Luc, "You see he is waiting for them."

Mulhausen began to button up his overcoat so as to lend himself a countenance and conceal his soiled shirt-front, and while Luc stooped down to pick up the napoleons he effected his retreat in good order. Nana then threw herself in an easy chair with her legs crossed. Her rage had not yet subsided, and her little white teeth grated together ominously. A fire had been lighted although it was springtime, and the ruddy glow of the incandescent coal played over her blue-silk stockings, as, enveloped in a black-satin dressing-gown lined with yellow silk and edged with lace, with her feet encased in red-velvet slippers, and her hands clasped behind her head, she leaned back thinking of how she could meet her engagement on the morrow. The jewels she still possessed were worth about a hundred thousand francs. If she could pawn them for two-thirds of their value she would be able to pay the upholsterers. It was the best plan, she thought; she would pawn the jewels early the next morning. That is, unless D'Albigny could help her, and on reflection she decided to have a talk with the marquis before coming to a final decision.

D'Albigny's abode comprised some eight or ten rooms, five of which were altogether empty. The others were hung with blue chintz, and scantily furnished with simple furniture which strangely contrasted with this fast-liver's former luxurious tastes. There was merely an iron bedstead in his sleeping-room, with a divan upholstered in chintz similar to the hangings, a leather arm-chair and a writing-table. The largest room was reserved for fencing, and its appointments merely comprised three or four pairs of foils and duelling swords, three masks, a few gloves, and a couple of jackets; the floor being covered with a gray-felt carpet. D'Albigny kept no servant; he lived alone; he never took his meals at home, but lunched at a restaurant or with Nana and dined at his club.

"Anything serious the matter?" he asked when he opened the door in response to Nana's ring, and saw her standing on the threshold.

"No — except that I am threatened with an execution."

"Ah, yes! by the way I was thinking of it. Come in, my dear. It's about the furniture, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"And you haven't the money?"

"No, I haven't a quarter of the sum."

"Nor I either. You are sufficiently acquainted with my affairs to know how I really stand."

"Yes, I'm aware of all that. And I didn't come to ask you for money, but for advice. Shall I pawn my jewelry?"

"No, certainly not. There is something better to be done

than that. Bring everything precious here — your jewelry, your papers and so on. They will be quite in safety in my rooms."

"You are wonderfully fertile in resources, marquis."

"The worst that could happen would be an execution after your bills have been protested. And then your furniture would be sold. The landlord would begin by claiming his rent out of the proceeds, and the upholsterers would have to content themselves with the surplus."

"Yes, they don't know that I have still some house property left. That means half a million to finish with."

"By the way, I will explain to you a plan which will set us on our legs again. I warn you, however, that you must play double or quits, and be prepared to sacrifice everything. Have you courage enough to chance it?"

"Of course I have."

D'Albigny began striding up and down with his arms crossed, while Nana stretched herself on the divan in a careless attitude. "Well, and Mulhausen?" asked the marquis, stopping short in front of her.

"What do you want to do with *him?*" she asked with an ironical smile, as she raised herself up on her elbow, resting her head on her hand.

"Do with him? why, go into partnership with him, my dear. I mean to start a theatrical newspaper which Mulhausen shall be director of. In exchange for the title he will have to supply the funds. I shall show him all the advantages of such a position, the acquaintances he will make among the actresses, the free admissions he will obtain to all theatres, the life he'll see behind the scenes, and so on. He will go into an affair of that kind readily enough; it will tickle his vanity. We shall get hold of one or two famished scribes — needy journalists are easily found — and we'll turn the writing over to them. Only we shall retain the management ourselves. We shall give some balls and dinners at the expense of the capital, take some stylish offices, and advertise largely. All Paris shall hear about us, We'll publish some smutty stories with illustrations, boudoir tattle and green-room anecdotes. It will be amusing, very amusing, you shall see.

"And what will you call the paper?"

"We must think over that. The title is a matter of great importance. Titles are not wanting, of course, but we must find one that will tickle the middle classes, and excite curiosity. However, we have not come to that point yet. What we need first of all is Mulhausen's cash."

"By the way, I saw him this evening. I had asked him to come as I wanted to tell him about my position, and beg him to do me a favor."

"Then of course he didn't come?"

"Yes, he did; for I had taken care not to let him suspect why I wanted to see him. However, my first words put him to flight."

"A woman like Nana only borrows on her decline," said D'Albigny, "and Mulhausen——"

"Oh! you know him, D'Albigny, you know he hasn't any courage, or even any blood. Do you know he had the impudence to offer me five napoleons? I flung them in his face."

"Oh! I'll find him again and make it all right. But you must get hold of your daughter. She belongs to you, and you must claim her. Do you really object to playing the comedy of maternal love, and the tragedy of repentance? You would still make an adorable Magdalen. Try to catch her with contrition. You must get her away from that young counter-jumper. The rajah's fancy will serve us finely. We can pit the two suitors against each other. There will be a clash between them, and at least one of them will be broken, and we won't undertake to mend him. Remember, Nana, you will be lost if you let yourself drift along! Only courage and audacity can sustain you, and help you onto your feet again. Go boldly to those people, the Naviels, and claim Andrée. If she is deaf to your prayers, throw yourself at her feet, kiss them, shed tears, real tears—do you hear? Strike your head on the floor, tear out your hair; that will have a great effect! I should like to be there to applaud you, for I am certain that you will be as dramatic as Sara Bernhardt in *Hernani*, or as Madame Favart in *Marion Delorme*. You have already played Marion, Manon and Marguerite, on the stage of life, with a talent and spirit which have aroused the hatred of your rivals, and the admiration of your lovers! One must struggle, my dear, against misfortunes, against age, against indifference, against forgetfulness, against everything, in fact! A woman like you must die young and beautiful, enacting some admirable scene of passion which will bring tears even to the eyes of sceptics. Come, let me see you walk, let me see if you still have your old style about you."

Nana rose and walked across the room. Her dressing-gown trailed behind her, with a serpent-like undulation and rustle; and she laughed gaily as she rehearsed her part before her customary manager.

"That's good—very good—that's it—bravo!" said D'Albigny, approvingly. "Perfect! perfect! That look of sovereign haughtiness becomes you divinely, my dear. Come, you are still superb, and whenever you choose your old mansion shall be rebuilt for you. And it's necessary! D'Albigny doesn't exist without Nana's mansion. People no longer know him at the club, they scarcely deign to recognize him on 'change; and they give him a patronizing nod if they meet him on the boulevard.

All that must finish, or we must take the last leap, you and I. So, let us sell what remains to you, rent a stylish mansion, set up another establishment, and launch out in the old style again. We will give some fêtes as we used to do, and plenty of tradespeople will be foolish enough to give us credit. We will live on the footing of a million a year. I'll arrange it all!"

"And afterward?"

"Oh! before we get to the end of our tether you will have found some Russian grandee or English peer to pluck. Your eyes used to bedim your diamonds, now your diamonds will make people admire your eyes. And then if you only had Andrée — think of it! And you shall have her, you must — you must have her, do you hear? I'm determined on it."

"I don't think I shall succeed," said Nana, after a moment's reflection. "However, I will try."

"When?"

"To-morrow."

"Very good. And now don't talk to me of the pawnshop for a woman like you."

Nana felt warmed afresh by the fiendish spirit of her titled swindler. This man was the fire of the infernal locomotive, which for twenty years had borne her onward amid mad enjoyment and senseless triumphs. "Come," she said to D'Albigny, "I thank you, marquis. I will give you power to sell what remains to me, and we will have the old life for another year. We shall find the gutter, or a throne at the end of the road. To-morrow, I will go to claim Andrée — that's understood — and if she won't come with me — woe to her and to her's, for depend upon it I will have my vengeance!"

"You say that splendidly, my dear, splendidly. Now go to bed early, and husband your powers. I will think over the means of setting us afloat again."

"Good-night, marquis."

"Good-night, marchioness — your hand."

She gave it to him with graceful pride. He stifled a smile of cold irony in a kiss, and then they separated.

Once alone, D'Albigny laughed drily, rubbed his hands together, and muttered between his teeth: "Eh! eh! It will succeed, it will succeed. Another year conquered from the enemy! The last half million will dance a pretty jig. But no more gambling on 'change! It's stupid. I've had enough of it. It's a game of chance, and one can lose at it. I prefer the game of love, at which I have always won. What a farce life is, and how easily fools are plucked! All the same, I regret I wasn't able to have that brute of a Naviel kept in jail, six months ago. As for the girl, if ever she falls into my hands again, I shall resort to extreme measures! I have always succeeded with

them both in business and love, and I may very well do so again."

Having lighted a cigar, he opened his window and began to smoke slowly. The sky was flecked with ruddy clouds, illuminated by the lamps of Paris. Far above, the stars were twinkling in the night air. Along the house-fronts lighted windows overlooked the street, and between the curtains one could see the graceful heads of women, who were leaning forward, trying to recognize the footfall of the men approaching over the pavement. From time to time D'Albigny heard some window swiftly closed, and then, as the curtains were drawn behind it, a light vanished from view. Little by little every casement was shut in turn, save one, on the fourth floor, overlooking the marquis' room. His cigar was finished, for he could feel the stump heating his long mustaches, so he threw it away, and closed his own window for the night.

"What a set of Nanas!" he muttered, shrugging his shoulders. "Good evening, pretty girls! Pleasant dreams, young men."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

PIERRE NAVIEL declined to return to the foundry where his arrest had caused such a scandal. He applied to the Western Railway Company for employment, but the whole winter elapsed before he found a new berth. In the meantime he stopped at home, talking very little but smoking a great deal; saddened by the thought that he was of no use to the household, and humiliated that his probity should have been impugned. As for Lucien Despretz, his recovery was delayed longer than had been expected. A fortnight elapsed after his adventure with the marquis before he was fit to resume work; and when he repaired to the establishment in the Rue Montmartre he found his seat occupied by a new bookkeeper.

The winter was a gloomy one. The artificial-flower business was by no means prosperous, for Andrée had to contend against the German flowers sold under their real value by the large shops and the competition of several convents. The Naviels and the Despretzs began to feel the effects of hard times more and more keenly, and it was evident that they must wait several months before they could incur the expenses of a wedding. Andrée at the same time desired and feared the arrival of her marriage day. Luc's words to her had in reality made a profound impression upon her mind. Still she had none the less gathered together her marriage toilet bit by bit. The white robe was ready, and the wreath of orange blossom also. She kept them in her wardrobe, carefully sheltered from the dust.

Luc had not returned to the Naviels', but Lucien spent almost every evening there. Whenever he was by chance called elsewhere he wrote to Andrée to warn her. The rajah's visits took place of an afternoon, as his physician had forbidden him to go out of doors after sunset. He was discreet enough not to call too often; but on each occasion he brought Andrée a bouquet of camelias and then sat down in the work-room in front of her, with his back to the light, watching his shadow as it spread across the table and played over the young girl's nimble fingers. Mademoiselle Naviel's beauty appeared to him in the ideal splendor of pure and chaste simplicity. He was not disturbed in his contemplation by the other girls who worked at a second table in a corner near the window and chatted together in an undertone. The rajah himself talked but little, for he feared that he might say too much, he preferred to sit watching Andrée in silence. An internal fire was consuming him. His large black eyes shone like the windows of a forge where a furnace is lighted. But whenever he felt the feverish power of passion growing within him, he subdued this momentary revolt of the senses by a stern effort of will. He did not even allow his trouble to be divined, but silenced the cry of hopeless desire, and plunged into the soft ecstacy of sidereal love and the mystical contemplation of a vision of unobtainable happiness.

At the beginning of April Naviel obtained employment from the Western Railway Company, and Lucien Despretz became cashier in a newspaper office at a salary of three thousand francs a year. Andrée's fête day fell upon the 1st of May; and on the previous evening Lucien, who was detained at his office by the necessity of making up the monthly accounts, sent her a bunch of white roses with a note in which he promised a visit for the following morning. That same evening the rajah chanced to come, after sending a bouquet of violets and orange blossom on before him. Andrée's work-girls had all brought some floral offering, and the Naviels as well, so that the parlor was full of flowers. The rajah seemed even thinner and sadder than usual. "When is your wedding to take place?" he asked Andrée as he entered the room.

"Very soon," replied the girl with a blush.

"I shall go to the ceremony."

"You?"

"Yes, I want to see you happy."

"I hope I shall be so, as I love my future husband."

"You act rightly, he is a worthy young man, and he loves you also. Have you received my flowers?"

"Yes, your bouquet is a marvelous one, and I thank you for it. But you must wish me many happy returns of my fête day. You have the right to kiss me on such an occasion as this."

"Since the customs of your country allow it I will do so,"

sighed the rajah; and he kissed Andrée very gently on the eyelids.

They remained for some moments alone in the parlor, and the Hindu, who had seated himself in an arm-chair near Andrée, murmured: "I think that I feel better." Then with a sudden start he exclaimed: "I hear some one at your front door."

Scarcely had he spoken than the hall bell began to ring, and Andrée, who felt somewhat nervous, remarked: "It is very singular, but I am not expecting any one——"

"Not even Nana!" cried the courtesan, suddenly entering the parlor and walking straight toward Andrée.

Mademoiselle Naviel rose to her feet. "You less than any one," she rejoined.

"And yet I have to speak to you."

"Speak, madame."

"What I have to say can only be heard by yourself."

"Excuse me, madame, but we have no secret to share, you and I. You have come here with an object I am ignorant of. It is only fitting that my parents should be fully acquainted with the motive of your visit. I am going to call them."

So saying Andrée left the parlor, leaving Nana and the rajah alone. "I congratulate you, prince," sneered the courtesan.

"About what?" he asked, with haughty disdain.

"On your choice. At all events your preferences don't leave the family. The daughter after the mother. So, that's your style, and Andrée takes pity on the lovers I dismiss."

"I am not anything to her, nor shall I ever be so—she does not love me."

"What does that matter? I didn't love you, and yet——"

"Oh, you!"

"I know what you are going to say. I am a degraded woman and I belong to whomsoever that buys me. But that's false!"

"I should not have employed so many words to express the same idea. But I do not intend to talk with you any further." With these words the rajah rose up and began walking up and down the parlor, draped in his mantle with his arms crossed, his head lowered, and his brow calm with the serenity of fatalism. Andrée soon returned accompanied by M. and Madame Naviel. "My parents consent to listen to you with me," she said, in a firm voice.

"I am going," remarked the rajah, "for nothing which that woman can have to say to you could possibly interest me." Then he bowed low to Mademoiselle Naviel, took leave of her adoptive parents, passed in front of Nana without looking at her, and left the house.

The courtesan at once drew near to the young girl, looked into her eyes, and tried to take hold of her hand; but Andrée

swiftly withdrew it. "It is useless, madame," she murmured, with an emotion she vainly tried to hide. "You would do better to refrain from demonstrations which are quite out of place here. Say what you have to say as briefly and as speedily as possible."

"I have come to fetch you, my daughter."

"I am accustomed to your audacity, madame, and your impudence does not surprise me."

"You wretched child! Have you forgotten what I am to you?"

"What you are? What does that matter to me? I believe that you gave me birth and that you threw me into the gutter almost as soon as I was born. That is what you are to *me!* I believe that if you could have destroyed me before my birth you would have done so. I believe that you became a mother in spite of yourself, and I have been told that it was on account of me that you discarded my unfortunate father, although he loved you like a madman. I believe that you have always detested me, and that you have tried to do me all the harm in your power. I believe that you have done your best to bequeath me your shame and drag me into your own disgraceful life. If I have not become as contemptible, as venal, as utterly lost as you are, it is certainly not your fault, or that of your Marquis D'Albigny! And you dare to speak of what you are to me! Do you imagine that I am wanting in contempt for you?"

"Despite all you may say, you will not prevent the truth from being the truth. Ask those who brought you up, ask your adoptive parents."

"They told me the facts, and I cannot change them. But I have done my duty. I warned my betrothed even before I had learned the truth from any one but you. I feared that my ties of relationship would disgust him with a marriage on which my heart and hopes were set. But I considered that loyalty required I should act like that, and I did so. And my betrothed, the man whom your marquis tried to murder, did not shrink from the idea of marrying a girl who owes her birth to you! All men would not have had the same confidence, for when one has the blood of such a woman as you in one's veins ——"

Nana drew herself up, rebelling against the contempt of her virtuous daughter. She tried to stifle the shame which she secretly experienced in presence of this purity of soul and body, to which her own impurity had given birth. "Mademoiselle," she cried, in a bitter voice, "you have not the right to insult me! Even if the lowest jackanapes spat insulting epithets in my face, it would be your duty to set yourself, pretty and pure as you are — do you hear my chaste young lady — between the filth and me. If you have been taught anything different here, you have been badly brought up; for the first respect of all, even

before self-respect, is respect for the woman who risked death to give you life."

"No, madame, no," exclaimed Pierre Naviel, "we are not wrong in teaching Andrée to distinguish between you and what is right. We have brought her up as well as we could, my wife and I; we have taught her how to earn her living honestly by work; we have set her the example, and when chance brought her together with you and she asked us what you were I did not hesitate to answer what I thought. 'That woman is a degraded creature!' I said to her; and yet I knew that she was your child. I had been told so at the Foundling Hospital. Still that didn't prevent me from taking her home, for I thought that everything depended on the way children were brought up; and, the fact is, I was right. The little one has rewarded us by her good conduct, and this proves that it is all folly to pretend that one can't escape vice when one is born in it. However, as you are here, make haste and explain yourself, for we have no time to lose."

"I have come to claim my daughter in accordance with my right."

"No, no, madame, you have neither right nor law in your favor. You may have succeeded in surprising Andrée and forcibly detaining her in your house. But you can't take her from us now — unless she herself consents to go with you, for we don't wish to impose our views on her."

As Naviel finished speaking he turned to Andrée with a questioning glance. "In speaking like that, father," she said, "you know very well what I should answer."

"But, no, no!" exclaimed Nana, "I can't suffer that you should hate and despise me. Listen to me, Andrée. I have been very guilty," and so saying the courtesan fell on her knees at her daughter's feet, "yes, very guilty, very cowardly, very vile. I deserve all that you have said to me, but to hear you repeat it is an expiation above my strength. I suffered before I finally fell into the abominable life I have led. I suffered frightfully. I had not always had good examples before my eyes like you have had; and yet I felt ashamed of myself before I succumbed, and resolved to brave everything. As long as I was young I was protected and urged onward, and told, over and over again, that I was right. All the men around me were so many servants, so many slaves; and now there is not one but who proclaims his contempt for me! And even D'Albigny, yes, the Marquis D'Albigny, insults me after having ruined me!"

"You have only what you deserve, madame," said Andrée, coldly.

"Yes; I deserve that passers-by should throw mud at me; I deserve being dragged in the gutter by that Hindu who just went away; but I don't deserve the same treatment from you,

Andrée, as from the lovers who have abandoned me in my fall."

"I am not obliged to tell you the contrary of what I think."

"And if you morally kill me by saying it, if you extinguish the last spark of repentance in my heart, if you thrust me back into the infamy from which I would escape — will you not then be responsible for the evil I may do? Come to me, come back with me, Andrée. You will save me, you will purify me, you will teach me virtue and chastity, you will be my mother, we will reverse the natural order of things, I will be your child, you will tell me how I ought to live, you will teach me how to work. Come, Andrée, come, I had never wept before, but now, see my tears, the tears to which my eyes are unaccustomed. Your hatred, your contempt have crushed me. Come, I beg of you."

"As for your tears I don't believe in them; your new-born love, your sudden affection, your repentance, are only so much falsehood and comedy. If it was to act this scene that you called on people who don't esteem you, you would have done far better by remaining at home; and it is advisable that you should return there at once, now that I know what you wish of me."

At the first words spoken by Andrée, Nana drew herself erect. Her nostrils dilated with sudden anger, and she again became beautiful with the splendor of yore. Lashed into vicious revolt, the blood now coursed more swiftly through her veins. It was as though the spring-tide of her nature had been renewed. She was strong, powerful again with her hateful, railing energy, and her raging, infernal jealousy of virtuous beauty. Bursting into a fierce laugh and pointing to the flowers which filled the room: "From whom and for whom is all this homage?" she asked. "Does each bouquet represent a lover? Are the young fellows well off? Do they pay you handsomely? For money alone is true and real in life; isn't that so, mademoiselle? That was why you robbed me of my richest lover, the rajah who just went away; and little Lucien will make a profitable investment by marrying you. Oh! he's in the swing, little Lucien is, and I shall compliment him on his betrothed. You may rely upon it, pretty rival, pretty thief who steals my exotic princes from me. Yes, rely upon it!"

"Take yourself off!" cried Madame Naviel who was flushed with anger.

Nana, still furious, went out with her head erect; and as she crossed the threshold she exclaimed in a ringing voice: "You shall hear of Nana, all of you."

"And you, if ever you try to harm Mademoiselle Andrée, you shall hear of me," exclaimed Margot who was waiting for the courtesan at the door off the work-room, and who gave her a look like that of a wild cat about to spring upon its prey. How-

ever, Nana did not deign to turn her head. She went slowly down the stairs raising her lace train with all the graceful haughtiness of yore.

On the following morning Andrée rose at her accustomed hour and set to work. At noon the house-porter brought her up a letter. She at once recognized the handwriting of the address, and foresaw that some terrible grief was in store for her. Still, with cold resolution, she tore the envelope open, and found that it contained two letters — one from Nana to Lucien Despretz, and the second from Lucien to herself. The former missive ran as follows:

"DEAR SIR— You did not think fit to believe what I told you respecting Mademoiselle Andrée Naviel, whom you persist in marrying despite all the warnings you have received. I have already told you, personally, that she was the Marquis D'Albigny's mistress on two occasions. First, when she lunched with him at my house, and secondly when I detained her there, after your quarrel with the marquis and before the fire broke out. You can believe this or not as you choose; D'Albigny and I, alone, are able to certify the truth of this statement which the interested party not unnaturally denies. But Mademoiselle Andrée Naviel has not confined herself to the marquis. During the fire which destroyed my house she was saved by a man who had been my lover, and who was to have lived with me, for he had left in my charge a considerable sum to defray the expenses of our connection. This sum disappeared during the fire, and after suspecting that Pierre Naviel, the young woman's adoptive father, had then appropriated it by theft, we have now every reason to believe — D'Albigny and I — that the said Naviel has devised a less dangerous but more infamous scheme, in view of effecting his object. He is simply speculating on the girl's beauty and the rajah's love for her — a love to which she lends herself with a readiness unknown to you alone. Pray, inquire, dear sir, at what hour the rajah is in the habit of going to see Andrée, and you will ascertain that he carefully calls when you are not in the house. For instance, last night, when you were unable to visit your chaste betrothed as usual, you were 'advantageously' replaced by the rajah, who had been duly warned of your absence. I write you all this because I believe that you are as loyal as you are simple, and as confiding as you are ignorant of women. If I have by chance made a mistake, and you are fully acquainted with the rajah's frequent visits to Andrée, you will have a right to ask me to apologize; for in that case you would be far more artful and far less scrupulous than I supposed.

"NANA."

"P. S. Isn't the delay in bringing about your marriage due in some respects to Andrée's intrigue with her prince?"

The second letter, which came from Lucien, was written in a trembling, irregular hand, as if it had been composed in the midst of a fit of passion. Still at the outset it had some pretensions to dignity, and the first words were not lacking in apparent calmness:

"MADEMOISELLE—I do not know if the much-hoped-for marriage between us can take place. I fancy not. Obstacles arise on all sides, and denunciations rain upon me, as witness the enclosed letter. I knew that the rajah—the ex-lover of the woman who is your mother—had abandoned his old mistress for you. I knew that he had offered you his fortune, just as he had previously offered it to Nana. You told me, no doubt intentionally, and to anticipate my suspicions, that he had gone to Madame Naviel's to buy some flowers, whereas the truth is, that he only goes to the house to see you. Finally, I learned by chance that you had been seen with him at the Grand Hôtel and in his brougham. I do not know why you have made a mystery of this acquaintance and these meetings, but I conclude that, as you have kept them secret, you had certain reasons which cannot be confessed. The enclosed letter shows that as I was unable to go and see you last night, I was 'advantageously' replaced by a wealthier rival. I now divine the real motive of all the delay which has taken place in fixing the date of our wedding. This motive is evident enough, and one must be a lover not to see it. Listen, Andrée, I have greatly suffered for you and through you since we first met. My situation has become intolerable. I no longer believe in anything. I doubt of the existence of God, of the sun itself, since I can no longer trust in you. As I told you on the day when you came to my mother's, had you even been Nana herself, I loved you so much that I would have married you all the same. But you ought to have told me the truth, you ought not to have deceived me! I might forget past errors, but I should be unable to close my eyes to present shame. I forgive you for all the suffering you cause me by your waywardness or irreflection. I love you like a coward, for I lack the heart to hate you. I would drag myself on my knees to beg forgiveness for this letter, for maybe I accuse you wrongly. My head whirls as I write this, at the thought that I am sending such a missive to you. Oh! Andrée, why were we not married sooner? Now it is too late; the holy bond which cannot be severed has become an impossibility; doubt has crept in between you and me. I could no longer offer you my former honest love. Despite myself, my desires would be purely material, you would no longer be what you were, the little saint, the little fondly-worshiped madonna—you would be—shall I dare to write it—a coveted mistress and nothing more. So it is better not to sully the ethereal dream we made together. Good-

by, then, my own love, for without you I cannot live; good-by, Andrée, think nevermore of

"Your old friend,

"LUCIEN DESPRETZ."

As pale as a wax effigy of the virgin, with dilated eyes and trembling hands, Andrée had the courage to read this cruel letter to the end. When she had finished she placed both missives in her bosom, called Margot, and in the harsh voice habitual to her in moments of anger, said: "Bring me my bonnet and mantle."

"Where are you going?" asked Madame Naviel, eagerly.

"To the Grand Hôtel, mother."

CHAPTER XXXV.

WHEN Lucien Despretz received Nana's letter, he at first tried to conceal from his mother the deep impression which it made upon him. It arrived while he was dressing in the intention of going to wish Andrée many happy returns of her fête day.

He read the letter twice, and perceived that it was in his power to verify the charges which it enunciated respecting the rajah. The latter certainly went to the Naviels', and took Andrée heaps of flowers, which she accepted, so that it seemed as if she encouraged his assiduity. It was also true that the rajah only called at an hour when he was certain not to find Lucien in the house. On the previous day he had gone there in the evening, contrary to custom, and as Lucien had warned his betrothed that his work would detain him at the office, it seemed as if Andrée connived with the rajah to inform him of her suitor's absence. Overcome by the weight of the doubts which assailed him, Lucien sank onto a chair with his head in his hands. At times it seemed to him as if Andrée purposely hesitated to conclude the marriage already so often deferred. Obstacles arose on all sides. Even Luc had declared, in his presence, that such a marriage was impossible. Madame Despretz also was opposed to it, since she knew that Andrée was Nana's daughter, and that the rajah was a constant visitor at the Naviels'. By degrees, her own visits to Andrée's adoptive parents had become less frequent, and it seemed as if there were some estrangement between them. Besides, she had fits of misanthropy which lasted for entire months, when she led a silent, retired life, avoiding every one, even her own son. It seemed as if in the depths of her ulcerated heart, some secret recollections subsisted, as bitter and as tenacious as remorse, some mystery which she concealed as carefully as if it were a source of shame. When she surprised Lucien, absorbed in his

reflections, with his head in his hands, she hastened to him and drew his hands aside, so as to try and read his thoughts in his face. His convulsed features and dry eyes, to which the virile austerity of a sudden resolution had imparted an unusually harsh expression, bespoke the most intense grief. She felt frightened at the sight, and then perceiving the letter which he still held in his right hand, she snatched it from him and read it at a glance.

"Listen, Lucien," she said, as she kissed him on the forehead; "listen, my poor boy; you have fallen into a perfect wasps' nest. In my opinion the mother and the daughter fully understand each other; the one is as bad as the other; and Nana must have written this letter with Andrée's consent, so as to make you give up the marriage. It is evident that they now have other views, shameful but profitable ones. Sure enough, that woman Nana has passed the rajah over to her daughter!"

"You exaggerate, mother. I think that Andrée is virtuous, although she is a great deal too coquettish. I will make the rajah speak; I will force him to do so; yes, force him, mother, or else——"

"Come, that girl will end by breaking your heart and blasting your life. Haven't you already lost a position and risked your life on account of her? Am I nothing to you? Don't you ever think of the grief and anxiety you cause me? Ah! that wretched Nana, what need had she to write and upset you with that letter? You wish to speak to the rajah, you say; well, be it so. And I will go and say a couple of words to his ex-mistress. What cause can she have to hate me so, that she persecutes me even in the person of my son? I had pardoned her, I had forgotten them both, herself and her D'Albigny. She wants to revive my recollections, does she? So be it, then! I will go to her house, and before her marquis I will tear the mask from off her face. For I also, I have an arm against her in my hand! But, first of all, Lucien, if you will take my advice, you will write to Mademoiselle Naviel to give her back her promise. Of course you must tell her why. If she is guilty, she won't try to prove the contrary; and if she is innocent and really loves you, she will surely find a means of showing it."

"You want me to write to Andrée?"

"Quite so."

"But if I release her from her promise, even if my suspicions are unfounded, she will remain proudly silent, as is usual with her, and then it will be all over between us."

"So much the better."

"You don't like Andrée, mother."

"Because I fear that you love her too much."

"Well, as you wish it; I will write to her."

Lucien did not have the time to reflect that this letter, written

on Andrée's fête day, was even a more grievous offense than the barely-expressed doubt which had almost resulted in a rupture on the day of the fire, in which Andrée would have perished but for the rajah's succor. The young fellow wrote the first few lines with studied coldness, and without any positive intention of really sending the letter; but as he approached the finish, he gave way to the true passion which inflamed him, and strove to be as energetic as possible in the hope that Andrée would give way in presence of his violent jealousy, as she had already done in the case of the marquis. However, each harsh word that he addressed to her proved a blow to his own heart, and he suffered cruelly as he felt his faith in her give way under the weight of slander. When his letter was finished, he folded it up with Nana's and placed them both in an envelope on which he rapidly wrote Andrée's address. Meanwhile Madame Despretz had been dressing; she was the first ready to go out, and she entered Lucien's room to kiss him.

"You are really going to that woman's?" he asked.

"Yes."

"What is the use of it?"

"I wish to have an explanation with her, and request her to leave us in peace." Then noticing Lucien's letter to Mademoiselle Naviel, she added: "Ah! so your note is ready? I congratulate you, my boy. Now you will be mine and only mine. I will post it for you if you like."

Lucien did not dare refuse. For a long while he had not seen such an expression of triumphant maternity on his mother's face. A ray of egotistical joy illuminated the eyes of the old woman, who, as if her mourning were perpetual, wore the same black dress that he had seen her in for years and years already. She threw her arms around his neck, and weeping with happiness, kissed him on the forehead and the eyelids. "Do you see, Lucien," she said to him, "we shall be very happy now. We shall be alone to love each other. Believe me, let the rajah be. Andrée would think that you regretted her. I shall post your letter in the Rue Crozatier, unless I take it to Batignolles and leave it with the porter at the Naviels' house."

"It would be better to post it, mother."

"As you like."

She then went off almost cheerfully, while Lucien began to dress. He left the house a few minutes afterward, and walked on scarcely knowing where he was going, but with his mind still full of Andrée. Suddenly he thought of the letter which he had just written to her, and stopped short as if he had received a blow on the skull. This letter really implied a rupture; he had not carefully weighed all the terms of it, but he now felt that some of them were too harsh, and would appear positive insults to Andrée. Why had his mother, so to say, almost torn that

letter from him? As he began to measure the void which the loss of Andrée would create in his life, he was astonished to feel that he would be quite unable to exist without her. Full of regret for his broken love, he dwelt painfully on his former dreams, crushed by the recollection of the delightful plans they had formed together. She again appeared to him as he had seen her the first time, in that box at the Théâtre des Bouffes, radiant with her fifteen summers, candid and charming amid the vicious homage which Nana had prompted, and which went rather to the courtesan's daughter than to Andrée's true, chaste beauty. How pretty she had looked that evening in her light, lilac-tinted dress, with gloves of the same shade, and sunny hair which fell to her eyes in wavy ringlets, veiling her Grecian forehead. Then he saw her again as she had been that day, that lovely spring morning, when he had ventured to speak to her of love. And corresponding impressions were aroused in his mind as in a dream; he had a vision of the Boulevard Beaumarchais, which they had walked along together; and he could see a gentleman in a dressing-gown, who was taking his ease on his balcony, reading the *Vie Parisienne*.

And now it was all over? Was that possible? He had deceived himself, he had been deceived! Even his mother did not like Andrée, and that miserable fellow Luc, Nana's valet, had, in connivance with his mistress not doubt, dared to declare that a marriage between Andrée Naviel and Lucien Despretz was impossible. As for Nana, her opinion could have no weight; and Lucien did not even try to think what could have been her real object in writing that letter. And yet at this very moment he submitted to this woman's influence; he was conquered by her desperate attacks upon Andrée, and gave credit to the statements she made — she, the unnatural mother, who slandered the virtue of her own child! With these contradictory thoughts revolving in his mind, Lucien drew near to the Jardin des Plantes. He stopped short on the quay and gazed fixedly at the distant pile of Notre Dame rising up against the pale azure of the chilly sky. At last he averted his eyes, and leaning over the parapet of the quay, he began to watch the gliding moire-like ripples of the river, which here expanded ere it wound ribbon-like around the island of La Cité. It seemed to the young fellow that over there, near the island, the water with its smooth, silky reflections assumed the tint of Andrée's dress. Could he live like this without going mad? he asked himself. No, it was impossible. He must repair what he had done — he must annihilate that fatal letter.

This decision taken, he hastened to the postoffice in the Rue Crozatier, which he found full of people. He had to wait twenty minutes before he could speak to a clerk in view of recovering the letter, and he was then told that he was too late. The letter

had already gone off to the central office in the Rue Jean Jacques Rousseau, whither he immediately hurried. After various inquiries there, he was at length sent to the proper department, the manager of which made him write a fac-simile of the address in view of having the letter looked for. Then half-an-hour's tedious waiting followed, and finally Lucien was told that the missive could not be found, although a very careful search had been made by the sorters. The young fellow hurried off almost without thanking the obliging officials, and hailing the first cab he spied, he told the driver to take him to the Square des Batignolles.

The porter of the house in which the Naviels resided readily informed him that an old lady, whom he recollected having seen a few times before, had called at noon, and given him a letter for Mademoiselle Andrée. He had taken it up-stairs at once, and shortly afterward Mademoiselle Andrée had left the house without saying where she was going. The misfortune was irreparable! Lucien's passionate soul was inflamed with a violent attack of rage. His despair was changed into jealous hatred against the rajah, the marquis, Nana, and even his mother herself. He rushed out of the house like a madman, sprang into the cab again, and called out to the driver: "To the Grand Hôtel!"

When Andrée, on leaving Batignolles, reached the palatial caravansary on the Boulevard de Capucines, she found the rajah alone in the room in which he had already received her, when she had solicited his testimony in favor of Pierre Naviel, unjustly accused of theft. It was a comfortable and even luxurious room, but quite destitute of characteristic elegance. The furniture, upholstered in blue and yellow satin, comprised some arm-chairs and a sofa with tassels and fringes, and near the window stood a writing table covered with open letters and unfinished answers. As soon as the rajah perceived Andrée he realized by the expression of her features that some unexpected misfortune had overtaken her.

"Nana?" he cried in a deep voice. "I can guess it—I see Nana's hand in this—You have been crying, Andrée—tell me, do you wish for that woman's blood?

"I wish for nobody's blood, prince; but I am slandered on account of you. Our acquaintance is incriminated. But read these two letters."

He held out his hand. "This one," he said, "comes from Nana. I will not read it—I have no doubt of its contents. And this one from your betrothed. Let us see it." He negligently let Nana's note slip on the floor, and began to peruse the letter written by Lucien. When he had finished two tears coursed down his sunken cheeks. "Poor fellow," he muttered. "You have come to ask me not to see you again—is that not so,

Andrée? I foresaw it." His broad chest heaved with a sob, and in a low hissing voice he added: "Yes, I understand: I did wrong; it is I who am guilty. I ought not to have gone to your home; I ought not to have taken you any flowers. He thought—the unfortunate fellow—how does he understand love then? Does he think that any evil ideas had entered my mind when I was with you? Does he think that, tell me, Andrée? He must be mad then! But each flower I took you said in its perfumed, blooming language what I myself was powerless to say. It was the essence of my being, my very soul that went toward you—my soul which I had deposited in the pure chalices of the flowers when I kissed their virgin petals before taking them to you."

"I know that you love me, rajah—Why did I not meet you sooner?"

"Why, yes, why? You would have been mine now, Andrée, yes, mine; while he sends you those letters fit to crush you. Poor fellow! he suffers — he has written that with his life-blood. Do you still love him?"

"Why do you ask me that?"

"Answer me frankly — do you love him in spite of all the sorrow he has caused you whilst struggling against his agony? Andrée, do you love him — tell me — answer?"

His eyes dilated with ardent hope, and the flame of fever rose to his cheeks, drying his burning tears. Everything in him begged, watched, prayed, even to the broken sighs exhaled by his lips, curved into an expression of pain, even to his hands, which tremblingly pressed those of Andrée. And what he asked — this man whose very silence bespoke high, powerful passion, was whether he might hope and live, or whether he must sacrifice himself and die.

"You ask me if I love him, prince?" rejoined Andrée, whose voice vibrated deeply, "I love him too well. I crush my pride under foot to come and beg of you to sacrifice your friendship for me to his unjust suspicions."

"It is well. You shall not see me at your house again. Bid your father and mother, all those whom you love, good-by for me. I will leave France. Perhaps I shall still have time enough to reach my country, and die where I was born."

"No, stay, prince."

"But why should I stay now? I hoped I should be able to witness your happiness. I longed to die under the pale sky of France, in the shade of her cypresses. But I am denied that resting-place. Why should I stay, since my presence causes your tears to flow, since you do not love me, since you love him——"

"I do not know. I have no longer the courage to think, or even to live."

"What can I do to console you? I offer to go away, I offer to die, if you wish it. From the land of death no travelers return, and your betrothed will not be jealous of a phantom."

While speaking he had passed one arm around Andrée's waist, and sustained her as she wept on in silence, with her madonna-like hands pressed to her brow. As the Hindu's words, at once chaste and ardent, descended toward her, as his breath stirred the curls of her tawny hair, he himself leaned forward, attracted by the suave perfume of her person. Half intoxicated by the scent, he stood with parted mouth, his lips seeming to kiss the very air around him. Andrée, on her side, despite her recent contact with the courtesan, felt an ardor of generous ideality steal over her. A world of new sensations was awakened in her mind. She had known nothing like it in her previous life, which, from the first sentiment of vague sympathy inspired by Face-to-Smack, down to the honest, sincere love she felt for Lucien, had been of a realistic character. Lucien had given her the first fruits of his reserved mind and chaste nature, which had not spent itself in facile intrigues. And for Andrée, who wished to be a man's one and only love, it was everything to be his first sweetheart, for she was proud enough to believe that once distinguished by her a lover would never seek elsewhere. Thus Lucien had this immense advantage over the rajah, that he had never loved any woman but Andrée. The Hindu had shown himself to all Paris in the courtesan's company. He had been seen at the opera with her, in the Bois de Boulogne, and at various entertainments. He had ruined himself for her on a former occasion, and he would have done so over again if Andrée had not crossed his path. Then without more ado he had abandoned Nana for her daughter, love in flesh and bones for Platonic ethereality. The rajah's unexpected idealism would have seemed ridiculous for many women, but for Andrée it had all the attraction of the unknown — that unknown which intoxicates free hearts and independent imaginations. Still it could not counterbalance the perfectly defined and openly confessed affection of the young fellow whom Nana was trying to turn from Andrée by a system of patient, perfidious slander.

"You see," said the Indian, pointing to the unfinished letters lying on his writing-table, "you see when I wanted to write I tried to collect my ideas but I could not find them. They had flown away with you and will remain with you. Who can see them and be jealous of them? Tell your friend that since you love him I leave you to him. If some day you changed, if you regretted having lost me — but no, that is impossible, it would be too late for me, too late for you. Oh! If I ever learned that he made you unhappy, if I ever knew that he abused his happiness to torture you, I would go to you, no matter where I might be. My will would be powerful enough to raise even the

earth of the grave. And dead, I would clutch hold of him with my skeleton hands and drag him away with me. Alive, I would kill him, and then carry you off in my mantle, near my heart, and warm your pretty hands and feet with my love. We would go far, far away together, to the country of the sun, where you would bear me children, so that the type of perfect beauty might not perish with you."

"Don't talk like that, rajah — leave me," said Andrée, making an effort to free herself. "I should almost justify the people who slander me if I listened to you, if I allowed you to talk and look at me as you are doing. Your eyes really burn me. We must separate. You have been a very kind friend to me, I have never had to complain either of your words or of your acts; you have respected my early affection and I thank you for doing so. Write and tell M. Lucien Despretz that you know through me that he is jealous on account of your visits, and that you intend to cease them. You will add that you have entertained great friendship for me, but that you have loved Nana too much to care for any other woman."

"What! Andrée, you want me to write and sign a lie! But lying is contemptible, and I cannot tell an untruth."

"You will do so for my sake, and I shall esteem you all the more."

"Well, I will do as you bid me."

"Then write this evening."

"Tell me what to say. I will write and sign it before you."

"So be it, prince, I accept the offer. Those who accuse me of betrayal must be confounded."

The rajah sank into an arm-chair, which he rolled to his writing-table, took up a gold pen, encrusted with precious stones, and wrote, while Andrée dictated to him as follows:

"Sir — I learn with extreme surprise that you wish to break off your marriage with Mademoiselle Andrée Naviel on account of me. I need not tell you, I presume, that my acquaintance with your betrothed has been entirely prompted by friendly politeness. Mademoiselle Naviel rendered me a great service when her mother's house was on fire, and I should have liked to acknowledge it otherwise than by ceremonious visits which have been by no means frequent. I have felt, and still feel great esteem for your betrothed, but nothing more. My passion for her mother is not yet extinguished, and it has taken up too much room in my life for me to feel a similar sentiment for any other woman. I consider Mademoiselle Andrée to be a charming girl, but I have never raised my eyes to her, for I knew that she loved another man who reciprocated her affection. I will give you what, in my eyes, is an irrefutable proof of this. If I felt the passion which is ascribed to me in connection with Mademoiselle Naviel I should not be disposed to share her heart

with another or to tolerate the existence of a rival. And in that case either you or I would be dead at the present time. Do not interpret the step I now take as an act of cowardice, for it is but the outcome of the calm, natural sympathy which I feel for Mademoiselle Naviel. I cease seeing her because I know that she loves you; if it were otherwise it would be you who——"

Andrée stopped short. "Oh! no," she muttered, "I cannot dictate that to you. Scratch out everything after the words 'I cease seeing her.' And wait a minute, I will arrange another conclusion. Meantime you can write the address: Monsieur Lucien Despretz, 22 Rue Crozatier, Paris."

While the rajah directed the envelope she reflected, and then exclaimed, "Finish the letter like this: 'Love your betrothed as she deserves to be loved, and refrain from feeling jealous of a stranger, who, far from being a rival, would like to be your friend.' And then sign your name."

The Hindu complied and fastened up the letter.

"Thanks, prince," said Andrée, "and now good-by. I intend to post this at once. He will receive it to-morrow morning."

At this moment a servant abruptly entered the room. "I did not ring for you," said the rajah.

"I have just knocked, prince, and I thought you called out to me, 'Come in.' There is a tall young fellow outside who insists upon seeing you."

At the same moment Lucien Despretz brushed past the servant and entered the room. The Hindu released Andrée's hand, which he had taken in his own, and quietly approached the young fellow, saying: "Who are you? It seems to me that I have met you before. What do you desire?"

"I desired the proof of a betrayal, and I need not go any further."

"A betrayal! You cannot find anything of the sort here, sir."

"I at least find a perjured woman, prince," said Lucien, pointing to Andrée with an accusing gesture.

"Lucien, you are mistaken!" cried Mademoiselle Naviel, springing toward her lover.

"I am mistaken, mademoiselle, do you say? Mistaken, when I surprise you here? No, no, I am not mistaken: I cannot deceive myself or be deceived by others any longer. I have been candid, good-natured, and stupid, eh? And you must have had a nice laugh together, you, the marquis, the rajah and the others, a nice laugh at such a foolish young fellow as myself! I confess that *I* am not inclined to laugh; and as your marquis half killed me I hope that this gentleman in his quality as a prince, will deign to finish me. That is what I ask for."

"I am not disposed to kill any one, sir; a man's life is sacred; nothing is more worthy of respect in the whole world."

"You are mistaken, prince, there is something more worthy of respect than a man's life, and that is a woman's honor."

"No woman's honor is imperiled by the rajah, and as for the young lady who is here, and who has asked me to forget the affection I felt for her, she will leave this room as pure and as honored as when she entered it half an hour ago."

"I dare say. She wasn't your mistress for the first time to-day."

"What infamy and cowardice!" cried Andrée. I ought to have sufficient contempt for you not to answer you — not to give you the proof that you are insulting a girl who deserves your respect, and who deserved your love; but I have not pride enough it seems, and as I can clear myself I will do so."

She then took up the letter which she dictated to the rajah, and handed it to M. Despretz. A tragical silence followed. Leaning against the wall near the window, Lucien slowly perused the missive. The rajah, crushed by the grief of losing Andrée, had sunk into an arm-chair. She, standing erect in front of her betrothed, waited for him to acknowledge his errors, and implore her forgiveness for having misjudged her. But as Lucien continued reading, his features assumed an expression of intense sarcasm, blended with bitter indignation. When he had finished he put the letter in his pocket, and turned to the rajah, exclaiming: "My congratulations, sir; the farce is well played. I keep this letter as a model of duplicity. And I congratulate you, also, mademoiselle, for I presume that it was to dispel my suspicions, and deceive me, that you came to request your new lover to write me that parcel of lies."

"I pity you, sir," said the rajah, "for I see that you cannot distinguish truth from falsehood."

"You ought rather to pity me for not having known how to keep the love of the woman who was mine, and whom you have stolen from me. As for me, I don't pity myself. I mean to be revenged. One of us two must disappear."

"It is I who intend to disappear."

"Yes, this letter says so, but your word does not suffice."

"Why do you insult me, young man? My life is over. The old tiger-killer is at your mercy, you can strike him, he would not even try to defend himself."

"I wish to fight with you, not to murder you."

"And I — I can't fight with you, for I have no motive for killing you."

"But I have one."

"Well, here I am then. Kill me. Are you frightened?"

"Ah! I will compel you to fight me."

"No you will not, sir. And yet it would rather be for me to

desire your death, for you are loved and I am not. It would be for me to hate you, and yet I don't. On the contrary, I want you to live happily with her."

"That man with me, prince!" cried Andrée. "Ah, no! a thousand times no, never, never! Andrée Naviel cannot be insulted with impunity. She is too proud to forget. This is the second time in six months that this gentleman doubts my honor."

"No, no, I doubt no longer. Your presence here is a proof——"

"Well, be it so! It is you who have willed it! And now leave me! I am no longer yours. I belong to the man who knows how to love me, I am——"

"Do not say that, Andrée, in heaven's name, do not say that!" interrupted the rajah. "You know very well that it is false, that you are not mine, and that you don't love me. It is he whom you love. Do not speak an untruth; for each lie that pride extorts from you rends your heart."

"I tell you, rajah, that it is you not he whom I admire; that it is you not he who deserve my love. I tell you that I love you now, and that I know that man no longer! Order him to go away so that I may remain with you forever and forever!"

The Indian, who was very pale, rose up and gently placed his hand over Andrée's mouth to silence her. "Be quiet," he said in a whisper.

"Since there is only cowardice and betrayal here, I am going," cried Lucien, "but to tell the truth, mademoiselle, I should like to know where you fish for your princes and marquises. One of them fights like a burglar, and the other refuses a duel. Try to make a better choice in the future, for among all these titled lovers of yours there isn't one even worthy of you."

Andrée approached Lucien with an implacable gleam in her green eyes: "Go, go, sir, you will repent of all that you have just said when it is too late," she exclaimed. "You will shed tears of blood, for I know that you love me, and that will make me strong to punish you for your disgraceful suspicions. Leave me, I have a friend here who is worth more than you. Go, I say, go."

"I regret, sir," said the rajah, "that you refuse either to believe or understand me. We might have been friends — for a short time, for the doctors say that my case is hopeless. It would be a pity to risk your life, which will probably be long and happy, against mine, which can only be a short and dreary one now. Come, sir, give me your hand. The rajah is loyal. Why should he wish to deceive you? I repeat the truth for the last time. I love your betrothed, but she does not love me."

"Ah! you love her! You confess then! But you wrote quite the contrary in your letter. So you see that you are lying, that

you are deceiving me, both of you. Well, keep her, prince, keep her for good!" And scarcely able to restrain his sobs Lucien fled along the passages of the hotel, till he reached the boulevard, thronged with people.

The spring-tide scene was full of the gaiety of active life. Bright flowers bedizened the hats and bonnets of the women; light dresses shone joyously in the sun rays which filtered between the early foliage of the trees, and open vehicles passed by at a swift trot, conveying grave-looking gentlemen, who talked theatricals or speculation on their way to the Bois de Boulogne. Lucien crossed the boulevard and turned down the Rue de la Paix. He traversed the Place Vendôme, followed the Rue Castiglione, and then cut diagonally across the Tuileries gardens. Under the old chestnut trees groups of children were playing, carelessly watched by white-aproned nursery-maids, who chatted together or listened to a regimental band, which was playing the Overture of *William Tell*. The spring flowers bloomed in clumps around the lawns, where tribes of sparrows were disputing over the crumbs thrown them by some ill-clad, misanthropical, lonely men, whom these urchins of the air followed about, with the bold persistency of Italian beggars. Spring had set her hand even on the blackened skeleton of the imperial palace, fired by the Communists, which rose up beyond the garden like a vision of evil times; here and there the ruins were decked with parasitic creepers and verdant weeds.

Lucien crossed the Pont Royal, scarcely knowing why, but seized with a vague desire to go on and on before him, so as to escape from the past. The rapid Seine, murmuring under the arches of the bridge, also seemed to have put on its spring attire now. Covered with golden spangles by the sun, it reflected the verdant foliage of the plane trees on the quay which extended far away in long, regular lines, here and there broken by a bridge or by a flight of steps leading to the water. The far-reaching vista seemed to attract Lucien, and he began to follow the quay, brushing past the loitering book-worms who were looking at the second-hand volumes exposed for sale on the parapets. As he approached Notre Dame, the thought of entering it occurred to him. Perhaps some supreme consolation was in store for him amid the solemn peacefulness of the house of worship. The huge facade, peopled with statues and pitted with niches, having light columns supporting a high gallery with a tracery of rosaces and ogival windows of stained glass, rose up betwen the two colossal towers bristling with quaint gargoyles, the fantastic outlines of which stood out against the mist rising from the river. A door on the left-hand side was open, and the young fellow went in and found himself in the dim, shadowy nave, where the frigid silence was disturbed from time to time by a beadle moving some chairs. The towering organ cast a shadow

over the entry, the stained-glass windows shed a mellow luster between the columns, the golden chandeliers hung, unlighted, from above, and in the damp side-chapels one could faintly hear the sleepy prayers of some old women, who, with lowered eyes, were mumbling some words in Latin, which they did not understand. Near the choir the light was increased by the golden splendor of the glorious rosaces of the transept. Peaceful calmness slowly descended into Lucien's soul. The perfume of the incense intoxicated him, and he felt a vague feeling of childlike devotion.

He had advanced as far as the choir when the beadle came towards him and said: "If you wish to go round the *abside* or visit the treasure, it costs a franc, sir."

Lucien felt indignant at the priestly rapacity which transformed a masterpiece into a shop, vergers into showmen, and the great cathedral into a relic fair. The peacefulness which the silence of the nave had momentarily brought him, was dispelled. He left the church and found himself in front of the Morgue, in presence of his mourning, the bitter certainty of which was strangling him like a murderer's hand.

"What is the use of living?" he asked himself. "Would it not be better to sleep there in the Morgue on one of these marble slabs?" And, with his brow resting on his hands, leaning on the parapet of the quay, he stood watching the gliding, moire-like ripples of the river, which in the early twilight re-assumed its silky aspect of the morning.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

When Lucien entered the rajah's room, Madame Despretz was ringing Nana's bell. Luc opened the door, and ushered her into the drawing-room. "Whom shall I announce, madame?" he asked, as if he did not recognize her.

"Adèle Despretz," she answered drily.

"Hum! what can she want?" the valet grumbled as he went to inform Nana of this visit. "She's capable of telling my worthy mistress who I really am, and if she did that I should be discharged in disgrace. The deuce! That would be unpleasant, for I have business to attend to here! I've not yet finished amusing myself with the marquis and Nana. I must find some means of parrying such a thrust as that."

He knocked at the door of the bedroom where Virginie was dressing Nana's hair. "Who is it?" asked the courtesan.

"A Madame Despretz. I told her that madame was very much occupied and could not see her."

"On the contrary; show her in."

Luc at once went in search of Lucien's mother.

Nana's new bedroom communicated both with the hall and with a dressing-room, hung with pink chintz, through which the vestibule might also be reached. When Adèle Despretz entered, the courtesan was seated in front of a wardrobe with a plate-glass door, while Virginie plaited her hair, still falling in part over her black satin dressing-gown, which showed up the roseate pallor of her complexion and the brilliancy of her tawny locks.

"Pray be seated, madame," said Nana to Lucien's mother; and then assuming a haughty air, she added: "Explain to me what you desire."

"The explanation I wish to have with you, madame, must remain between you and I."

"Virginie, make haste and finish. In five minutes I shall be at your disposal, madame."

The maid finished plaiting her mistress' hair and left it hanging in a double tress down her back. "I will finish this evening if madame desires it," she said. "But this style suits madame's beauty very well." And then, after darting a piercing glance at the visitor, she disappeared behind the door-hanging.

"Well, we can talk now," said Nana.

"I had frequently heard speak of you, but I had never seen you except from a distance," rejoined Madame Despretz, "now, however, I can understand why I was abandoned for you. And yet in former times I was considered beautiful. But sorrow has made me what you see — an old woman!"

"Who was it, pray, that abandoned you for me?"

"The father of your child."

"What! you were — well! that's altogether too funny! I must tell that to D'Albigny, it will amuse him and no mistake. Ah! so that fool turned you up to follow me? Well, do you know, you bequeathed me a nice lover in him, and I must compliment you on your old flame. Do you happen to know what has become of that interesting personage?"

At this moment the door of the room was softly set ajar, and Luc's pale face peered under the yellow curtain.

"You wish to know what has become of him, madame?" rejoined Lucien's mother.

But before the courtesan could reply, Luc altogether entered the room and asked, "Did madame ring?".

"Leave us along! Can't you see that we have to talk?" cried Nana.

"I beg madame to excuse me, but I thought I heard her ring," And drawing near to Adèle Despretz, Luc rapidly whispered as he passed her, "Silence and mystery if you care for your son's honor."

"Oh! I've little doubt about the fellow's fate," resumed Nana. "He has probably gone wrong altogether. He stole some money, pretending that it was for me, and he was shut up in Mazas in consequence, but somehow or other he was let off before the trial came on. I had quite lost sight of him for ten years or so, when one day I met him dressed as a mountebank at the fête of St. Cloud. He was a scoundrel of the deepest dye, and I feel happy that I have never heard of him since."

Luc had closed the door, but instead of leaving the room he had slipped behind the hanging which fell to the floor. Neither Nana nor Madame Despretz had noticed this false exit.

"And now, madame," added Nana, "I suppose you did not come here merely to revive an unpleasant recollection which has nothing flattering about it for either of us. If you have never had any other lover than that fellow, I can understand how it happens that you have remained all your life in needy circumstances. And I would bet that if it were a question of beginning again — but no matter; I have certainly not been more virtuous than you, perhaps less, but taught by experience I have known how to select my lovers, and so I have had a fine time of it. I don't at all repent of what I have done, and my only regret is that it must all come to an end. The moral of this, madame, is that a woman ought never to compromise herself with needy fellows. As Dumas *fils* says, a woman's virtue is her capital; and it is a question of investing it advantageously. Isn't that your opinion?"

"No, madame."

"Really? Then I don't understand you. One of two things — either a girl must remain a virgin until she is married, or if she takes a protector, he must at least keep her in proper style."

"A virtuous woman is certainly above everything else, and there is nothing more worthy of respect than the duly married mother of a family; but if a young girl yields to a man by weakness of heart or a surprise of the senses, or if she becomes the victim of a snare, she can only urge one excuse and people will only admit of one extenuating circumstance — that she was guided by no spirit of calculation, that she gave herself up freely and did not sell herself."

"You talk very well, but remember that it is necessary to live. If the gentleman abandons you, what becomes of you then? And suppose he leaves you a child, what do you do with it?"

"One must look for work, toil with one's fingers, and give the child the breast. The sight of the little one proves consolation for everything," said Madame Despretz.

"But then a woman can't earn enough to eat, even?"

"Earnings are small, no doubt, very small, but one doesn't

die of hunger. The little money one can earn by work suffices while one is young, and later on, the child, reared in the school of poverty, does something for himself, and ends by helping his mother. I fed my son when he was a child and now he feeds me. It is on his account that I called on you, madame. He loves your daughter. What is the use of putting obstacles in their way?"

"Ah! so you are the mother of the impertinent youngster who came to insult me in my house?"

"He is very young, remember, and madly in love with Andrée. In revenging yourself on one of them you punish them both, for Andrée loves my son."

"Oh! a mere fancy of hers, she will get cured of it. She does not love him as much as she says. Do you swallow those stories? Do you lend a hand to lovers' nonsense at your age? In the interest of both of them you ought to help me to prevent this marriage. Besides I shall prevent it without you. Nana's daughter ought not to marry."

"I fear, alas! that by acting as you are doing, by slandering your own child so as to disgust my son with her, you will only succeed in fanning their passion and bringing about some catastrophe. If you had only seen my son this morning when your letter was brought to him. Do we know what may be the result of it? Come, leave them free to marry each other. I hardly believe in happiness myself, but, after all, who knows? It might rather be found in a regular life than in a disorderly one. Be a mother, madame. A great many persons in your position try to keep their daughters from the fatal path they themselves have chosen. Do as they do. My son is a worthy fellow, he would let himself be cut to pieces for Andrée's sake; but if he doesn't get her he will surely do something foolish. Come, madame, I beg of you not to trouble the young folks any more. Despite what you have written, I prefer to believe in your daughter's virtue, and to respect her as if she were my own child, since my son wishes to marry her.

"Come, come, all that is so much folly. I have told you already that the stupid little thing mustn't marry at all. I have other views for her, and I shall never give my consent to such a senseless proposal," replied Nana."

"But remember that having renounced your duties as a mother you have also renounced your rights. Andrée does not owe either respect or obedience to the woman who abandoned her to public charity."

"If she refuses to obey me I shall compel her to do so; I have the means at my disposal.

"You will be the cause of her death, then."

"What does that matter? I prefer her dead, rather than see her a pauper."

"My son earns his living, madame, and your daughter also."

"That is just what I won't tolerate. I wish Andrée to be rich before anything else. I wish her to be courted by a gentleman, and not by counter-jumpers."

"I see that in coming here to plead for peace, I was destined not to succeed. But justice exists, madame, and if you continue attacking honest folks, you will one day be struck in your implacable pride. Ruin has already begun to overtake you — you and the Marquis D'Albigny — old age will finish you, and whatever you may do to hide your white hairs, and your wrinkles, I can perceive them, madame, I can see them. You will soon learn what the fidelity of your flatterers is worth!"

"I think, madame, that we have nothing agreeable to say to each other, and it happens that I wish to speak to one of my friends, the Marquis D'Albigny, whom your son has no doubt mentioned to you." With these words Nana stretched out her arm and pulled the bell. The door was opened on the inner side and then closed again, and finally Luc appeared. "Tell the marquis that I wish to speak to him as soon as possible," said Nana.

The valet bowed while Madame Despretz rose up, and in a tone of aggrieved dignity, exclaimed: "I will make room for him." She then left Nana's presence followed by Luc, who went down the stairs behind her.

When they were on the lower landing he touched her on the arm and whispered, "Listen; never tell any one who I am, and I will revenge you both on the woman who has made you suffer, and on the man who struck your son."

"Be it so. If you do that I will forgive you," and she held out her hand to the ex-clown, who pressed it with his long, bony fingers. He then rang the marquis' bell.

Madame Despretz was already at the bottom of the stairs when D'Albigny opened the door. His face was white with shaving soap, and he held his razor in his hand. "Madame Nana wishes to speak to you, sir," said Luc.

"Tell her that I shall be up-stairs in five minutes."

Luc darted up the flight, four steps at a time, and bending low before Nana's imperious glance, he said respectfully, "Monsieur le Marquis will be here in five minutes, madame."

"Very good. Leave us."

The valet awaited D'Albigny in the hall, and after ushering him into Nana's room, he again opened the door and glided behind the silken curtain as he had already done during Madame Despretz's visit.

After the latter had retired a strange idea had occurred to Nana. "This woman," she thought, "says that she had but one lover, and in that case Andrée and Lucien would be the

children of the same father. Chance has come to our assistance, and I can't understand how this woman Despretz can think of allowing such a marriage to take place." In the evil joy which this discovery caused her, the courtesan burst into a peal of shrill laughter which filled the room with sardonic gaiety. And drawing up her figure, which was still superb, bending her panther-like loins with juvenile flexion, she stationed herself in front of the mirror, leaning back and clasping her fleshy hands behind her neck, down which her weighty tresses glided similar to trailing serpents.

The Marquis D'Albigny surprised her, still attitudinizing in this style. "Are you rehearsing your return to the stage?" he asked, ironically.

"Yes, I am trying my strength."

"You sent for me, I believe. Was it for me to witness your exercises?"

"No, I need the advice of your experience."

"Speak then. I am listening, and I will answer you."

"Do you know who has just been to see me?"

"No, I have no idea."

"Well, Madame Adèle Despretz, the mother of Andrée's lover."

"Adèle Despretz — is she young?"

"No, her hair is quite white, she must be nearly sixty."

"Oh! then, it isn't the one that I knew."

"You knew some one called Adèle Despretz?"

"Yes, very intimately. A case of first love, my dear. Ah! by the way, I made a bold stroke there. But I have never boasted of it or tried to see the woman since, for I might have been seriously compromised."

"Indeed! you interest me. Tell me the story, pray."

"What's the use. Tell me rather why you wished to see me?"

"Well, this is the case at point. The Adèle Despretz whom I have just seen here is, as I have told you, the mother of Andrée's lover. Now she states that she herself has only had one lover in her life, and that lover was precisely Andrée's father."

"What! that fellow you had arrested — that old flame of yours?"

"Quite so; and now do you understand the situation?"

"Of course I do; Andrée and Lucien have one and the same father. The coincidence is a curious one — a very curious one, upon my word."

"Yes, isn't it? Well, I see that we understand each other. I am not at all sorry that this old woman, who talked to me like a witch, should be prevented by force of circumstances from

carrying out her little plans. As for the Naviels, they will make a nice grimace."

"I think that luck is coming back to us, Nana. I finished dealing with several matters yesterday. I have had the lease of your new house drawn up. I have seen the upholsterers, and everything will be done in style. I shall arrange a card-room like the old one — green and gold — the Imperial colors, you know, they will bring you luck. Before a month is over everything will be ready for the house-warming. I shall have all the horses, eight in number, including a couple of saddle ones, over from England, together with the coachman. I will undertake to organize the establishment and bring people to your fêtes. It will be for you to detain them, for, of course, I can't do everything, and my assistance is in some matters limited."

"All right, marquis, you shall seen the Nana of yore again. In a common frame, amid petty surroundings, I don't feel like myself. What I need is the grand style, some exciting game for heavy stakes. Come, marquis, at the worst we shall at least have another gay year."

"Not a year, my dear, let us say six months unless ——"

"Six months!"

"Well, understand: the rent of the house, the furniture, the stables, your toilette, and the inaugural fêtes, will represent three hundred thousand francs. We shall have a hundred thousand in cash which we can dispose of. If we are lucky at play we shall get on all right, otherwise we shall be in debt at the outset, and there will be an execution at the end of it. The great point will be to prolong the situation and defer the final crash as long as possible; and maybe another rajah will fall from heaven, or Andrée may return to you, but I hardly think that, after the reception she gave you the other day. Sooner or later, one of these fine afternoons, she will learn what it costs to keep me waiting, just as that Adèle Despretz I spoke about learned it some years ago."

"Ah! by the way, tell me the story; it must be rather funny?"

"Oh! it's the simple tale of a girl who was employed at a glove shop in the Passage de l'Opéra, and who lived with her parents at Asnierès. One evening, when it was snowing hard and we were in a cab together, I committed a rape upon her. The little fool resisted, and wounded me rather badly in the neck."

"And you have never seen her since?"

"Oh, no."

"I can understand that it was a nasty affair, and it might have cost you dear."

"If I had been prosecuted, it would have been all u, p, with me. I still carry a scar on my neck — there, look!" So saying

D'Albigny turned his collar down and showed Nana a white mark on his neck.

"The girl probably said nothing about it," remarked the courtesan.

"That was it, I fancy. However, a short time afterward I learned that her father had turned her out of the house, and that she had given birth to a child. I never knew whether it was a girl or a boy, besides, I never bothered myself about it."

"You were quite right. You might have compromised yourself. As for my Adèle Despretz, who is at least sixty years old, she can have nothing in common with your one."

Passing into her dressing-room, Nana took up a green crystal bottle with a silver stopper containing some essence of violets, and scented her cambric handkerchief, which was embroidered with a coronet and a Gothic N. "Come, D'Albigny," she called, "let me perfume you."

The marquis consented. She sprinkled some of the essence over his coat collar and his handkerchief, and they then passed out of the dressing-room by a door leading into the hall. Half a minute later one could hear their steps as they went down the stairs together. The yellow hanging of the bedroom door was then drawn aside, and Luc's tall, slim figure appeared. Once again there was a tragical gleam in his black eye. "Faugh!" said he, "how nasty this place smells!"

CHAPTER XXXVII.

"GOOD-BYE, prince," said Andrée to the rajah, when Lucien Despretz had gone off; and she held out her hand with apparent calmness.

"So it is all over between us?" he asked.

"No doubt."

"And we shall never see each other again?"

"Perhaps, if one is re-born."

"And then you would love me?"

"Yes, for you are good."

Then she went off without looking at him, while he stood there with his arms crossed, and the shadow of the curtains falling over his face. His eyes followed her as she went toward the door, and long after she had gone he stood there, still staring into space.

Andrée went across the Place de l'Opéra toward the Chaussée d'Antin; she was walking very fast without noticing it, as if she were wafted along by some immaterial spirit. It seemed to her as if all ties were severed that had bound her to human things. Among the faces she saw, she did not distinguish which were

gay or sad or evil-looking; but she thought she noticed that every one divined the intensity of her despair, and that universal pity followed her steps. In the square in front of the church of La Trinité she espied some children rolling and playing in the dust, while their mothers sat hard by, knitting or embroidering. Pigeons were cooing as they flew from tree to tree, and over the front of the church there hung a white mortuary drapery. A hearse was ascending the incline. A coffin, covered with a white cloth, and buried beneath crowns and flowers, lay upon it, and behind there came a double row of women in mourning.

Andrée stopped short, and a strange feeling took possession of her. It seemed to her as if her own body reposed in that maidenly bier under the spring flowers. It was only when the *cortege* had passed under the porch into the church that she again set off at a swift walk toward Batignolles. On reaching home she found Madame Naviel waiting for her anxiously. Nobody asked her a single question, but they all seemed surprised that she was so calm. She worked as usual until the evening, scarcely speaking a word; but once, when Madame Naviel slowly muttered: "It is strange that Lucien hasn't been here," she rejoined, with a singular laugh: "Yes, mother, it's strange, isn't it?"

After dinner, as the work was not pressing, the girls went up to their garrets, and the Naviels retired into their room. Andrée remained for some time in the parlor, leaning back in an arm-chair, broken as it were by the useless struggle she had engaged in, and feeling a strange torpor steal over her. All around, her fete-day flowers were exhaling their soft, intoxicating perfumes. She would have liked to die like this; her death ought to be such a one, now that life had no further need of her. This idea, this longing for eternity, gradually became stronger and stronger, and carrying all the bouquets into her room, she piled them on her bed.

The orange blossom, the white roses, the violets, mingled in a perfumed heap with the large clumps of lilac which her work-girls had given her on the previous evening. She slowly unfastened the bouquets, for it seemed to her as if these children of the spring would breathe more freely when released from their bonds. Having carefully closed her door, she stopped up the chimney, and every aperture or crack by which the air could penetrate from outside. Opening her wardrobe, she removed her wedding-dress from the shelf assigned to it and laid it over the arm-chair. Then, taking a seat in front of the looking-glass, she let down her hair, which fell in wavy locks about her knees, and placed the wreath of orange blossom upon her head. She looked so pretty like this that she could not help smiling to herself in the mirror. At the same moment, however, she began to feel a kind of dull pain on her temples. She took off her

walking-dress, the short skirt of which fell to the ground; and next she removed her cotton stockings and put on others of white silk. At each movement she made, a fresh glimpse of beauty was afforded. At one moment she let her shift slide down over her bosom and donned her wedding chemise, embroidered with real lace and fastened with a bow of blue ribbon. Then she imprisoned her waist in her white satin stays, put on an embroidered petticoat, and finally her wedding dress, which was of white faille with a long train. Throwing her hair back over her shoulders, she looked at herself for the last time. She saw that she was rather pale, with a dark circle round her eyes. She was feeling more and more oppressed, and breathed with increasing difficulty.

Thus arrayed in her bridal robe, beautiful with the blonde tragical beauty of Ophelia and Marguerite, she experienced a supreme, painful satisfaction on seeing that she looked so desirable. Then, taking a sheet of note-paper and an envelope, bearing her initials, she first wrote Lucien Despretz's address, and next penned this last testament of her love, in which, whilst giving her body to death, she offered herself in thought to the man whom she adored.

"My friend, you almost killed me this afternoon, and I complete the work of destruction myself. Now that the hope we formed so long ago, of living side by side, has vanished, there is no reason why I should continue to exist. By to-morrow I shall have passed away. I did not think that I loved you so much, and yet I had entire faith in you. Why were you not the same with your Andrée? Yes, *your* Andrée, for I was really yours, Lucien. Above and before everything, I was sincere. I should not tell you that unless I had formed a firm resolution to die, and had already disposed everything with that object in view. So I can think of you without false prudery, and picture you such as you were to me, such as I knew and loved you. It now seems to me as if it had always lasted. I cannot recall a moment of my girlhood, a dawn of thought with which you were unconnected. I can see you as I saw you that morning when you went with me to the railway station, and when for the first time you spoke to me of love. The words we then exchanged are still present in my mind. Yes, I see you as you were that day: you had put on a gray summer suit for the first time. And afterward we loved each other for months and years, each day more and more. You loved me then, Lucien, you did not think of breaking off our engagement — and I, I can own it now, dear friend, I would have cut off my hair to stretch it as a carpet under your feet. I am no longer proud, as you have known me to be, my eyes are no longer stern. You have reproached me for their harshness ever since our first quarrel. But now every-

thing in my nature has become more gentle; it is as if my body were softening and melting away.

"I feel that I am falling asleep. Shall I suffer in dying? I hope not; I have suffered enough in life. I have put on my wedding-dress and my bridal wreath, for I want to look pretty. I thought of you whilst I was dressing, and wished that you could see me as I am, as you would have seen me on the happy day, which you could neither wait for nor understand. Oh, why, why did you lack confidence? Why did you listen to slander? You met me at the rajah's, and you at once thought that what cannot happen had occurred. Your letter had maddened me, and without knowing what I was doing, I wished to beg the prince to forget me and refrain from visiting our house. I was saying good-by to him when you came in. He wished to marry me and make me rich, but I sacrificed everything to the happiness of belonging to you. When I perceived you I was so surprised that I was hardly able to justify myself. And you would not believe me! That is why, Lucien, my dear, dear Lucien, why I write to you a last time to tell you the truth. I have laid all my flowers on my bed. I shall stretch myself under the blooming shroud, and, before daylight, its perfume will have sent me to sleep forever. You will never more see my eyes open to gaze into yours; my lips will never more part to speak to you. Beg my parents to forgive me, to bury me in my wedding-dress, and kiss me lovingly before I am placed in the coffin — I scarcely know what I am writing — my ideas are becoming confused — I feel a hammering on my temples, a ringing in my ears — one would think that the lamp was going out—good-bye, my Lucien, my well-beloved good-bye, I love you —"

An attack of weakness prevented her from writing further. She barely had the time to stretch herself on the white bed, under the perfumed shroud. She buried her shapely legs and tiny feet under a pile of lilac, made herself a sash of the rajah's violets and orange blossom, and placed Lucien's white roses on her bosom and her neck. Taking one of them in her right hand, she frequently kissed it, thinking of her lover. She was now more heavily oppressed, and her breath came short and hard. She seemed to be dreaming. She thought that she was very happy, very rich, and married to Lucien, and that they lived together in a lonely house in the depths of a forest. They rose at break of day, and went to breathe the air of the woods on the margin of a sheet of water. There was no breeze to ruffle the smooth surface which gazed at the trees and the sky, like a large deep eye, fringed with iris leaves as with long green lashes. Behind the low branches hanging across a pathway the sun appeared, scintillating betwixt the foliage, like some golden rosace at the end of a cathedral nave. And hand in hand together, they strolled along under the shadowy oak trees. A

powerful woodland scent was exhaled with intoxicating effect by the moss, the lichen, the ivy, and the nut-trees, and she and Lucien were seized as with the vertigo of love. Clasped in a tight embrace they kissed each other, and then it seemed to her as if she fainted in his arms. How tall he was, her darling Lucien, and how much in love with her! His kisses strayed from her finger tips, from her polished, almond-shaped nails, to her neck, and even to her bosom. He threw her fallen hair around him, and plunged his brow, his cheeks, his mouth, into the living silk.

At this moment the final consciousness of reality passed away from her. The suffering was of brief duration. She closed her eyes. The last thing she vaguely heard was the clock of the church of Sainte Marie striking four o'clock. Then the lamp went out, and soon afterwards a pale gleam of light stole in through the casement. The first stir of the great city waking up was wafted into the room, and the daylight spread over the bed. Andrée's body had been stiffened by a spasm of pain, but there was soft calmness now upon her slumbering brow, buried amid the roses, upon her lowered eyelids, the black lashes of which stretched almost to her tightened nostrils. Her parted mouth, which seemed to await some kiss she had dreamt of, had an expression of enraptured beatitude, although the short pang of physical agony had somewhat drawn the lower part of her face together, thus tampering with its pure outline. The white rose she had kissed had long since slipped from her right hand onto the pillow; and the bloodless fingers which had held it now had the transparency of alabaster. Her left hand, partly closed, rested on her bosom, the firm contour of which was visible in the pale dawn.

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Leaning over the parapet on the quay near the Morgue, Lucien Despretz waited for the night to come. All the events of the day filed past, one by one, before him. The letter which the rajah had written, the last words which he and Andrée had spoken, the tone in which they had been pronounced, the slightest incidents of the scene, were all engraved on Lucien's mind. He was conscious that in the fit of jealousy which had overtaken him, he had behaved with fatal injustice, which his whole life would not suffice to expiate. Remorse was awakened in his mind, supine at first, but soon keen and galling, wringing his very heart. He began to understand that he had crushed his happiness, the love and pride of a virtuous girl under his heel, and that it was all over. He had driven the most adorable and best of sweethearts out of his life.

Then he began to walk again, and retracing his steps, he passed down the old Rue du Cloître beside Notre Dame, crossed the river, and reached the Rue de Rivoli. An hour later he arrived

at Batignolles. He wished to throw himself at Andrée's feet, implore her pardon for his unjust suspicions, beg her to forget the wrong he had done her, and consent to a final reconciliation. He entered the house and asked the porter: "Has Mademoiselle Naviel come back?"

"Oh, yes," replied the man, "she returned some time ago. You can go up-stairs. You will find her there."

"I will come back by-and-bye," said Lucien; and he fled along the Rue Legendre to the Parc Monceau, which was still open and sat down on an unoccupied bench.

"You can go upstairs!" Those few words had terrified him. But five stories separated him from the girl whom he had mortally offended in presence of the rajah. No doubt she would never pardon him. If he dared to present himself in her abode, no matter how humble and repentant he might be, she would refuse to see him. Still he hesitated to believe in the certainty of her implacable resentment, and, like a coward, he tried to persuade himself that he would obtain the pardon he no longer hoped for. When the Parc Monceau was closed he again returned toward the Square de Batignolles; and, on reaching the Rue de Rome, he followed the iron railing above the railway cutting, as far as a spot whence he knew he would be able to see Andrée's window. This window was already lighted up, although it was by no means late. Andrée was not in the habit of retiring to bed so early. But who could tell? — she was perhaps ill. This thought frightened him, and at one moment he was even seized with the idea: Andrée is dead!

He then began to ask himself what means he should employ to rid himself of life, if he were forever parted from his betrothed. The means were at his feet. He had only to jump over the railway bridge in the Rue Legendre, and choose the moment when a train was approaching to be crushed by the engine. Such a death would at least be a swift one.

He decided on it. It was too late to go to the Naviels, so he went down as far as the station, entered a café, and ordered a glass of brandy and some writing materials. He then wrote a few lines to his mother to apprise her of his determination, in case it became a necessary one, and to beg her to inform the Naviels of his fate. Towards midnight he once more ascended the Rue de Rome in the direction of Batignolles, and on reaching the railing of the railway line, in front of the square, he again saw a light burning in Andrée's room. Something unusual was evidently happening in that maidenly chamber to which all his thoughts and desires went forward. Until the dawn he wandered along the railing, in view of that solitary flame which seemed to be watching mournfully in mid-air. But as the daylight broke the lamp went out, and Lucien's supreme fear that Andrée might be dead almost vanished at the same time.

The morning trains were now arriving at full speed. The engines with their lamps still lighted passed by like fantastic visions enveloped in fluffy smoke. Now that Lucien had less fear that Andrée was dead, he began to tremble at the thought that she might be in danger of death. Her adoptive mother had no doubt sat up watching her since the previous evening. The light he had perceived had not been a funeral taper, but rather a night-light, indispensable in a sick-room. He turned pale with apprehension at the thought of the truth he longed to learn, and afraid of what might await him, he still lingered near the railing, not daring to go to the Naviels.

For two mortal hours he hesitated. At last he gave himself till six o'clock, and sitting down on the stone ledge below the railing, he waited, worn out with fatigue and suspense. Shortly before the appointed hour he crossed the railway bridge and hastened to the Naviels' house. The outside door was open: Pierre Naviel had no doubt already gone off to his work. Lucien passed before the porter's lodging without saying anything, and went up-stairs. He paused on each landing, striving to contain the beatings of his heart by pressing his trembling hands to his chest. When he reached the fifth floor he gazed at the bell-rope in utter terror. How many times had he fearlessly, joyfully rung at that door before him! He listened, breathlessly. The work-girls had evidently not yet come down, for he could only hear the heavy tread of Madame Naviel and the clatter of the crockery and the ringing of the spoons which she was taking out of the sideboard in the kitchen. Nothing seemed altered in that peaceful home, and this apparent serenity lent him a moment's courage. He rang the bell.

It was Madame Naviel who opened the door. "What! you already?" she said, quietly.

So Andrée had not revealed what had taken place at the Grand Hotel? That seemed to indicate that she had formed some secret, perhaps fatal resolution; and so Lucien immediately exclaimed: "I wish to speak to Mademoiselle Andrée."

"She is not yet up, the lazy girl. Wait for her in the parlor."

As Lucien entered the sitting-room he at once noticed that the fête-day flowers were no longer there, and turning to Madame Naviel, he asked: "What has become of the bouquets?"

"Why, yes, they are not here; where can she have put them? In her room, no doubt."

The old woman went to Andrée's door, and tried to open it. But the young girl, contrary to her usual habit, had slipped the bolt on the inner side. "Andrée! Andrée!" cried Madame Naviel.

All was tragically silent behind that closed door, and a ter-

rible conviction entered Lucien's mind. He threw himself against the door, the bolt gave way, and in front of him he saw Andrée as white as a wax Madonna, and clad in her bridal robe, stretched upon her bed amid the flowers. An unfolded letter and an envelope addressed to Lucien lay upon the table. He understood everything at a glance, snatched up the letter, and springing to the window, threw it wide open, while Madame Naviel darted toward Andrée, sobbing.

"Take the flowers away," she said to Lucien, "and leave the room a moment while I undress her. Call Margot. She must go for a doctor."

Lucien hastily carried all the flowers into the work-room, and then bounded up to the attic. Meanwhile Madame Naviel succeeded in taking off Andrée's bodice and unfastening her stays. She had just put her in the bed with her head well raised on the pillows, and she was bathing her temples with cold water when Lucien returned. A moment afterwards Margot came in, crying out in despair. Lucien had begun to tap and rub Andrée's hands in view of re-establishing the circulation of the blood.

"Quick, Margot, go for the doctor!" cried Madame Naviel; and she gave the medical man's address to the work-girl, who immediately hurried off.

Lucien was beginning to feel more hopeful. He said to himself that Andrée was certainly not dead, for her lips were still ruddy. Taking a small looking-glass from a table, he held it in front of the young girl's lips, which were still smiling at her last dream. After a few seconds he withdrew the glass and saw that it was slightly bedimmed. "She lives," he muttered.

The fresh morning breeze swept in through the open window, making the curtains flutter. Lucien took Andrée in his arms and raised her up, with her head reclining on his shoulder. She heaved a sigh and gently moved her lips. Five minutes later she opened her eyes, her big eyes, still astonished by the vision of death. She looked dreamily at her lover, and whispered faintly: "Lucien! my Lucien!"

The words died away between her lips, but at all events her respiration was becoming more regular. Her pulse began to beat, a pale roseate tinge suffused her cheeks; and, slightly raising her right arm, she began to complain: "Oh! how I suffer!"

"Where do you suffer, Andrée dear?" asked Lucien.

"My head," she murmured.

Margot soon came back with the doctor, the same one who had attended Andrée after the accident in the Champs Elysées. He requested Madame Naviel to explain matters to him, and when she had done so, he grumbled, shaking his head: "Yes, that's it; an exceptionally romantic and nervous nature — a terrible temperament, in fact. A love affair, no doubt! It is a

case of intoxication rather than asphyxia. What flowers were they?"

"Lilac, orange blossom, violets and roses."

"That was enough to kill her. It ought to have killed her. However, it seems that there is a providence for lovers." And so saying the doctor gave Andrée and Lucien a keen glance. Taking the young girl's arm, he next felt her pulse. "Well, well," he exclaimed, "we shall escape death this time. Will you please give me some writing materials. I will leave you a prescription."

Lucien offered the doctor some paper similar to that on which Andrée had written her last farewell. At this moment she turned her head, recognized the medical man, and asked: "Am I going to die, doctor?"

"No, my child, you won't die, but on one condition."

"What is that?"

"That you take what I'm going to prescribe for you, and that you don't begin over again." He rose up as he spoke, bowed all round, and left the room. Madame Naviel went with him to show him out.

Lucien had fallen beside the bed, and his hot tears rained upon Andrée's drooping hand. "Andrée," he stammered, looking at her with appealing despair; "Andrée, my Andrée, will you forgive me?"

She gazed deeply into her lover's eyes with her own green orbs. "Read my letter," she said, "you will see — that I had forgiven you. What have you done with my beautiful white roses?"

"I have put them far away — I will never give you any more!"

"Oh, yes, you must; only I will never use them like that again."

"I, also, had resolved to die, Andrée. I was determined on it if we had been parted." Then, taking from his pocket the letter he had written the night before at the café near the railway station, he added: "Read this, will you? I informed my poor dear mother of my resolution. What can she think, for I have not been home all night! I spent my time near the railway watching your window, which was lighted up. I foresaw, I divined that something would happen. Ah, what a terrible night, Andrée! And meanwhile you were writing to me and preparing for death. We have both been mad, I think."

At this moment Madame Naviel returned into the room, followed by Margot, whom she sent to the chemist's to have the prescription made up. A few minutes later there came a ring at the bell, and Lucien went to open the front door. He found himself face to face with his mother. "Do you want to kill me, Lucien?" she asked, coldly.

By way of answer, he threw his arms around her neck and kissed her on her white hair.

"Then you still love her?" she asked.

"I must love her since I still live. And, mother, you must wish that I may always love her, wish it for me, for if I ceased to care for her, my heart would no longer beat."

"Well, I resign myself since this girl is your only joy. Where is she?"

"In her room. She wanted to die — she is very ill."

"Ah, poor girl! And on account of you?"

"Yes, mother."

"Then she must love you — let us go and see her."

Madame Naviel now appeared at the parlor door. "Come in, Madame Despretz," she said. "Our lovers are causing us no end of grief and worry."

The two women entered Andrée's room, followed by Lucien. Bright fever spots were now glowing on the young girl's checks, and she complained of violent pains in her forehead, and of intense heat in her chest. Lucien approached the bed and passed his arm behind the pillows, so as to sustain her, for she was sinking with fatigue. When Margot returned with the medicine it was he who gave it to his darling Andrée, and all day long he remained there watching over her. By the evening she felt somewhat better.

On returning from the chemist's, Margot had hurriedly gone up-stairs to her attic on the floor above. She carefully closed her door, raised the slight-made mattress of her iron bedstead, and rent the covering underneath with her bony fingers. Her round glowing eyes sparkled with cruel satisfaction. From the skylight above her a pale light fell upon her bony profile and freckled forehead. Her hair, which she had not had time to comb, hung entangled over her eyebrows, and little, if anything, remained to her of the charms which had taken Paillardin's fancy in years gone by. Drawing from her bosom a flat bottle containing a somewhat brownish liquid, she spelt out the inscription on the label, and muttered between her yellow teeth with a shudder: "Yes, that is it." And then she slipped the bottle into the mattress through the rent she had just made.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

A FEW days afterward Nana and the marquis were installed in a little mansion of the Louis XIII. style in the Avenue de Friedland. It was quite new, with a wrought iron gateway in front, and a large lawn decked with clumps of rose trees. The coach-house was on the right hand, and above it rose a conservatory which communicated with the grand reception room.

A double flight of six steps conducted to the vestibule on the ground floor. This vestibule, paved with alternate slabs of black and white marble, was decorated with some modern paintings and statuary purchased at the last Fine Art Show. On the right hand side you entered the fencing hall, which was very richly adorned with trophies of weapons and suits of armor of various periods. To the left you found the cardroom — all green and gold in the marquis' taste — and at the rear, the library with its appointments of carved oak. The spacious dining-room, in ebony encrusted with silver, was on the first floor; and you passed from it through a boudoir saloon into the grand reception room communicating with the conservatory. Overhead, the bedrooms and the bathrooms were to be found, and there was ample accommodation for the servants under the eaves. In the rear of the house there was a courtyard, which had proved just wide enough to enable the landlord to pierce several windows with a view over some neighboring grounds. In three days' time Nana was fully installed in her new abode. Luc became the marquis' valet. Virginie still acted as the courtesan's maid, and in addition D'Albigny had engaged a head cook with two assistants, a coachman, a groom, a footman, and a porter, who was to help Luc and wax the floors.

On the fourth day the marquis, who had luckily won ten thousand francs at cards at his club the night before, chanced to meet Mulhausen, and the latter invited him to lunch at the Café Anglais. After the repast, D'Albigny, who had telegraphed his instructions to the coachman, took Mulhausen for a drive round the lake in the Bois de Boulogne, in a bran new victoria which had left Binder's that very morning. The reappearance of the marquis with the prince caused quite a sensation in the Bois, and D'Albigny was greeted with all the more favor as he was supposed to have made another fortune. He was received with a salvo of obsequious bows, which he acknowledged with haughty pride. It was a splendid afternoon, and the green lawns, the light dresses, and the stylish equipages round the lakes, made up a fitting May-day scene. The horses trod softly over the sand, their harness shining through the dust in the full sunlight. White six-oared rowing boats darted across the lake, leaving a silvery trail behind them; and above the water the islands rose up, with hardy full-foliaged trees planted on their sloping lawns, which were decked with tufts of scarlet and pink geraniums. Under the larches on the margin of the lakes people of the middle classes, seated on campstools, were watching the handsome equipages as they filed past. Now and then, from one of the shady bridle paths specially reserved for equestrians, some feminine rider emerged, leaning over the arched neck of her spirited horse, who impatiently pawed the ground with his polished hoofs. Soon he went off at a canter again, and the fair

rider's white veil and black habit receded down some verdant avenue waving in the dusty air. The forest guards, in green uniforms with silver lace, stopped short, with their arms crossed and watched her till she disappeared in the shade, when they slowly resumed their promenade, with their left hands resting on the hilts of their swords.

"Listen to me, Mulhausen," D'Albigny was saying. "I have decided to profit by my new spell of luck to try another style of life. Speculation on 'change no longer favors me. I mean to have a try in another direction, and I'm half inclined to ask you to join me in my new scheme."

"Well, my dear fellow, what is your plan?"

"We must have a newspaper, half financial, half theatrical, you understand. You could invest a hundred thousand francs in the affair. What are a hundred thousand francs to you? In exchange you would have the title of director, with a salary of twelve thousand francs a year."

"That's little enough."

"The salary's nothing. The influence is everything in a matter of this kind. It would give you admission behind the scenes. You would be in your element there — a woman-killer like you. You would see all the girls at your feet, my dear prince. Then, in addition to the feminine business, we might have a financial bulletin, in which for a consideration we would puff and patronize some rather shady companies. Do you understand?"

"Yes, yes, I understand. It is a matter to be considered. You are a very clever fellow, my dear D'Albigny; you know how to turn your hand to anything. But what would you do on the paper?"

"I should be the manager, and as I understand accounts and financial matters generally better than you do, I would act as cashier and write the financial bulletin."

"But who would take the theatricals in hand?"

"Why, you, of course. Unless you prefer to give a hundred francs a month to some reporter who would scribble the articles ready for you to sign them."

"But if the paper went to smash, my hundred thousand francs would go to the dogs."

"The paper won't smash, with you and I at the head of it. I will arrange to keep the pot boiling merely with financial puffs. Besides, if the affair took a bad turn in a few months' time, if instead of making any profit we merely paid our expenses, there would always be time to sell the paper, and you would certainly save the greater part of your investment."

"That's true, no doubt. Well, the proposal pleases me in principle, but I want twenty-four hours to reflect over it."

"And I — I will engage to start the paper in a week, just the

time to take some offices, engage a printer and clerks, give notice of the title to the prefecture of police, print enough bills to cover the blank walls in Paris, and prepare circulars for distribution—in fact, everything that is needed for properly launching an affair of the kind. You shall see that I understand the matter, my dear prince—you shall see."

They had now reached the end of the larger lake, and the coachman turned to ask the marquis for his instructions. "Home," replied D'Albigny.

They returned along the Avenue du Bois de Boulogne, with their heads held erect by their stiff shirt collars, and looking very serious as they slowly puffed at the cigars which they had paid two francs apiece at the Café Anglais. D'Albigny had now changed the conversation. After starting Mulhausen on this track, he pretended not to care whether he joined him or not, for he had several other persons in view who would readily invest plenty of money in such a scheme. It was out of pure friendship that he had spoken of his plan to the prince, at least he led the latter to suppose so. Mulhausen, on his side, was reflecting over the many advantages which his vanity would certainly derive from such an investment. He would be a newspaper director and proprietor, and although he would have to risk a hundred thousand francs, they would bring him at least twelve per cent. profit; besides, if the paper was not as successful as they anticipated, they could sell it. Even if he lost fifty thousand francs over the affair, the personal advantages he intended to reap from it would prove compensation. Such a modest sum as that would have soon melted in the heat of the footlights, if he had tried to penetrate behind the scenes and become familiar with the women there by any other path than that of theatrical journalism.

As they passed the Arc de Triomphe, he asked the marquis: "I say, D'Albigny, what about your own salary? Of course you won't work for nothing."

"I shall relinquish my salary to insure the paper's success. By-and-by, if it's successful, we'll see. But at present I want to cut down the expenses, and so I suppress all charges for my management."

"But if you think that six thousand francs would be of use to swell our cash in hand, I would willingly relinquish half of what you suggested I should take. You can understand very well, D'Albigny, that if I go into the affair, the amount of the salary won't have much importance for me. No, what would rather induce me to fall in with your views is the question of influence."

"Yes, naturally; own it at once. The influence you would have over the women, the control you would exercise over theatrical reputations, and so on. You have spent three hun-

dred thousand francs in Nana's boudoir, Mulhausen, but come, now, the hundred thousand you might advance for this affair would certainly yield you a more productive, flattering and agreeable result — although, of course, I don't mean to say anything against the queen of the day, for that would be ungrateful on my part."

He tossed his cigar onto the pavement as he spoke, and indulged in a bitter laugh. The victoria was at this moment drawing up in front of the courtesan's new house. The coachman whistled and the porter came to open the gate, whereupon the vehicle entered the grounds, whisked round the sweep, and drew up again in front of the steps. The prince was the first to spring heavily on the marble slabs, and D'Albigny followed him with juvenile agility. Luc saw them under the verandah, and opened the glass door to admit them into the vestibule. D'Albigny began by showing the prince the card-room and the fencing-hall, and then taking his arm he led him into the grand drawing-room, at the same time saying to Luc: "Go and tell your mistress that the Prince of Mulhausen wishes to present her his respects."

Luc bounded up the stairs, four steps at a time, with the agility of a tumbler, and while he was informing Nana of the prince's arrival, D'Albigny showed his future partner over the grand reception-room, which was decorated in the Louis XIII. style, and profusely furnished with credences, cabinets, stools and arm-chairs. A chandelier of the period hung from the panelled oak ceiling, adorned at the corners with figures carved in relief, and the doors and windows had curtains of old Aubusson tapestry, the faded tints of which were in perfect keeping with the brown woodwork. Some old Spanish paintings, a few canvasses of the Venetian school, and two copies after Rembrandt — notably, a superb one of the "Night Patrol" — completed the adornments, which would have been of unblemished harmony but for a Chinese screen, too brightly colored with fantastic birds and butterflies soaring in a glaring sky. Mulhausen examined everything like a connoisseur, and made no remark until he had finished his inspection, whereupon he cordially complimented D'Albigny.

'It is here," said the marquis, "that we shall give our winter fêtes. We will have a few masquerade balls, to which we will invite all the pretty actresses, with our colleagues of the press, the artists of the brush, the chisel, and the graver, the composers and musicians — in fact, every one with a name in Paris. You shall see what an advertisement that will prove for the paper!"

"Good, very good; quite so," repeated Mulhausen, nodding his head.

Nana at this moment entered the room. She wore a superb

dress of garnet satin, trimmed with flounces of *point d'Angleterre*, high-heeled shoes, a triple necklace of pink coral, a lace *fraise* and corresponding ruffles, which half concealed her velvety hands and pink nails. Mulhausen was fairly dazzled. He went toward the courtesan, and kissing her hand with Teutonic grace, exclaimed: "I need your forgiveness, my dear, for many things."

"Not at all, not at all. It is I who must apologize for having mistaken a gratuity intended for my servant for a prince's present to myself.

The German accepted the courtesan's complimentary irony as sterling gold, and touched in his princely love of ostentation, he rejoined: "I am going to invest a hundred thousand francs in the newspaper D'Albigny has spoken to me about, and I mean you to share the profits."

Nana was hardly able to repress a smile, but in view of hiding her delight she pretended to know nothing of the matter, and asked the marquis: "Pray, what is this affair which our friend is talking to me about?"

"You shall learn that later on, madame, when things are in full swing. For the moment, it is a secret between myself and Mulhausen." And turning to the prince, D'Albigny added: "Women are all the same, they invariably want to know everything."

"Ah! I can guess it!" exclaimed Nana. "It is some financial enterprise that D'Albigny is suggesting to you, Mulhausen. Well, if you don't care to invest any funds in it, I know some one who'll only be too glad to do so—a serious capitalist, a perfect Crœsus, in fact."

"You are mistaken, madame," said Mulhausen, who began to fear that Nana, impelled by feminine spite, might try to prevent him from becoming the director of the projected newspaper, and propose some new friend of hers in his stead. "The marquis made me the proposal, I accepted it, and the matter is settled."

"It is evident enough," remarked D'Albigny in an authoritative tone, "that you can't interfere with our private conventions. I have various profitable schemes in view, and it is only natural that I should propose to Mulhausen to join me, since he has always been my friend."

"Quite so," observed the prince, who had struck the attitude of a connoisseur in front of the copy of the *Night Patrol*.

"We have landed the German," whispered the marquis to Nana, while Mulhausen still stood with his back to them.

"Madame is served," announced Luc, who now appeared on the threshold, in a black dress coat and red silk stockings.

Mulhausen turned round on his heel and bent his right arm to offer it to Nana. Followed by the marquis, they passed together

under the Aubusson door-hanging, which Luc had raised with his long, bony fingers.

A week afterward the newspaper was ready to appear. It was simply called the *Gazette des Coulisses*,* and the prince and the marquis installed themselves in some stylish offices in one of the grand new houses of the Avenue de l'Opéra. As D'Albigny had given a grand "press" dinner at Nana's the evening before, almost all the Parisian newspapers wished success to their new compeer. In the course of the first week, however, twenty thousand francs of the hundred thousand so rashly advanced by Mulhausen, were skillfully transferred by D'Albigny to Nana's private purse, to enable her to keep up her present style. On the other hand, as the paper did not pay its way, it became necessary to break into the reserve fund so as to discharge current expenses. The contributors brought their articles already prepared, and they were paid in promissory notes, which a banker had agreed to discount if the paper patronized a shady financial venture which he had just launched.

D'Albigny cunningly gained three months' grace by this arrangement, and the banker, who believed that the house where Nana resided was rented in the marquis' name, looked upon the furniture it contained — worth a far larger amount than the annual rental — as his security. Besides, he was delighted to have a paper to puff his enterprise, and as he was preparing to bolt in case of failure, he readily consented to spend other people's money in the hope of reaping personal profit. So all the clerks, contributors, and serious creditors of the *Gazette* were from the first paid in paper, on which the moneymonger charged a tolerably high discount. Even Mulhausen took to flying kites, not that he was altogether used up, for he still had a few hundred thousand francs remaining to him, but he considered it more convenient for the time being.

From the very outset the prince's specialty was to give audiences to actresses. This semi-connection with the stage flattered his gross vanity, and he considered himself a more dangerous woman-killer than ever, although, to tell the truth, the women who came to beg a puff of him resigned themselves to his familiarities all the more readily, as they had sacrificed their last principles long before entering his office.

While the *Gazette*, planned by D'Albigny and carried on,

* For the benefit of the reader unacquainted with French, it may be mentioned that the word *Coulisse* has a double meaning — a theatrical and a financial one. In the parlance of the stage it means the *slips*, and in connection with the Bourse it applies to the fraternity of unauthorized stockbrokers and jobbers. So the title selected by D'Albigny for his newspaper cut both ways — appealing alike to mummers and money mongers. —TRANS.

thanks to Mulhausen's money, was thus issuing its first numbers, Nana spent the cash she had obtained from the manager's strong box in jewelry, dresses and suppers. Gold slipped once more through the fingers of this evil fairy. She re-appeared in the Bois and at the races, at the Circus on Saturdays and at the Théâtre Français on Tuesdays, at all the first performances, in fact, contriving by dint of art to hide the threatening symptoms of senility. She had a final flash. While D'Albigny patronized clubs and fashionable gambling dens, bet at the races, and compelled tottering financial companies or embarrassed theatrical managers to pay him for articles which were written by anonymous scribes, Nana received Mulhausen en tête-à-tête, and exerted her seductive powers to retain him near her.

The German prince had seemingly forgotten how she had railed at him in the days of her real splendor. He was intensely flattered by her present amiability, which proved so much incense to his vanity; for although middle age had overtaken him, he was still most abominably conceited. He was half inclined to believe that "irregulars" and theatrical stars of the third magnitude only smiled engagingly for his especial behoof; and he tried to make people believe that he had supplanted D'Albigny in the good graces of Nana, who was still the queen, even in her decline.

Since her coroneted initial shone once more on the panels of her carriage in the full sunlight of the Bois de Boulogne, she had again become a woman for Mulhausen. He often accompanied her on her afternoon drive, or went shopping with her to her jeweler's, her modiste's, her dressmaker's, or the large establishments like the *Louvre* and the *Printemps*. Nana profited of his readiness to act as her *cabellero servante* to make him pay for costly trifles which seriously diminished his last resources. It is true that she made a pretense of borrowing the money which she laid out in this style, but as she never spoke of returning it, it was really the prince who paid the piper.

One evening she gave a little tea party at her new residence. D'Albigny and Mulhausen introduced a few journalists, the director of a café-concert, the secretaries of two theaters, and three financiers. The marquis speedily called their attention to the amiability which Nana showed toward the prince; and he did so purposely in view of stimulating Mulhausen's conceit. He even complimented him with mocking exaggeration on his many presumed conquests; and the German swelled out with vanity, his sanguine, sensual face beaming with satisfied enjoyment, while D'Albigny spoke of certain lengthy "audiences" at the office of the *Gazette*—audiences granted to pretty actresses, and which the clerks laughed over in spare moments behind their desks.

The tea was served, on this occasion, in silver gilt cups, with spoons of rock crystal, worth a hundred francs apiece, and which D'Albigny had purchased that same day with Mulhausen's money at a curiosity shop in the Avenue de l'Opéra. Luc waited on the company with the assistance of an extra servant. A few "blue stockings" had come to witness what all Paris was calling Nana's return to fortune; and toward the close of the evening, three feminine vocalists and a couple of petty actresses put in an appearance so as to please Mulhausen and not to vex D'Albigny. Nana received them with a patronizing smile and a grand display of haughty distinction. She willingly promised to stimulate the success of those who had just come out, treating the newspaper, management and editorship, as her property, and Mulhausen, D'Albigny, and their assistants, as her clerks. After tea the prince and the marquis passed into the card-room with some young swells, while the other men remained with the women in the drawing-room.

By three o'clock the last guest had retired, and D'Albigny joined Nana in her room. He remained there for ten minutes or so while Virginie arranged her mistress' hair for the night. "How much did you make in the card-room to-night?" Nana asked him abruptly.

"I lost."

"The devil you did!"

"One can't always win, you know. Besides, it would end by seeming strange."

"How much did you lose?"

"Two hundred napoleons."

"There isn't as much as that left in the whole house."

"We must resort to credit, my dear; it is the right moment. Confidence is established. And, besides, now that Mulhausen has tasted the sweets of his directorship, I shall tell him that it is absolutely necessary he should advance another hundred thousand francs to keep the paper going. And he'll advance them, sure enough," added the marquis sneering, "if only through fear of losing his first stakes."

"Of course, he has his finger in the machinery, and he must pass through it altogether. Besides, I hold him, on my side, and I shan't let him go until he is as dry and as flattened as a donkey's hide reduced to parchment."

Virginie had nearly finished, when Luc entered the room and asked: "Am I to light the tapers in the room of Monsieur le Marquis?"

"Wait for my orders," replied D'Albigny.

Luc stood still, rigid and silent.

"Before leaving you," said the marquis to Nana, "I must give you some news."

"What about?" asked Nana, springing up so suddenly that a pinch of her hair remained in Virginie's hand.

"Your daughter is on the point of marrying."

"Well, I shall be at the wedding," cried Nana, whose green eyes flashed fire.

"We shall all be at it, of course."

Luc was standing near the door, with his slim, dark, fantastic figure in full relief against the pink curtain. He started despite himself on hearing what Nana and the marquis said, and D'Albigny, recollecting that the valet was waiting, turned round and saw that his eyes were fixed with strange persistency on Nana.

"Luc," he said, "go and light up my room."

The valet retreated backwards under the door-hanging, and Virginie, who had now finished dressing her mistress' hair, was dismissed for the night. A few moments later Luc returned and said: "I have lighted up Monsieur le Marquis' room."

D'Albigny kissed Nana's hand, and then turning to his servant he harshly exclaimed: "Well, go to bed then."

"Monsieur le Marquis is very kind," remarked the ex-clown, with a nasal twang; and he mentally added: "And I shall be at the wedding also, my fine fellow."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

After seeing despair and death so near, Andrée and Lucien returned to the delight of living with perfect faith in one another, hopefully looking toward the peaceful happiness of the future. Nothing could henceforth shake Lucien's conviction that Andrée loved him. All his doubts had vanished in presence of that supreme proof of affection which she had given, by wishing to die when she thought herself parted from him for ever. Now, too, he on his side had to win her forgiveness for having doubted her, and he strove to do so by dint of chaste, respectful tenderness, such as first love only can evince.

They strolled every evening to the Parc Monceau, and sat down near the ornamental water there. Amid the yellow glow of the lamps in the neighboring avenues a fragment of blackened wall rose up, with a gaping window, besides which a charred shutter hung downward by one hinge. This was all that remained of Nana's former mansion. In the stretch of sky behind the paneless window a star appeared, regularly at the same hour every evening, shining out like a silver tear in the black vault. Lucien and Andrée had finished by adopting and loving this star, and when they reached the sheet of water of an evening they both of them sent it a kiss, pressed close to one

another. They took a pure, childish delight in sending these kisses through the constellated space to meet upon this star It seemed to them as if these true-love kisses purified the gloomy souvenir of Andrée's mother, which the ruined wall evoked amid their evening happiness. Under the starry constellations which flashed like diamonds upon the brow of night they wended their way homeward, calm in mind, their hearts full of joy, their senses tranquillized by the approaching certitude of satisfied desire. Andrée leant upon her betrothed; her shoulder, at once soft and firm, rested against his arm, and she walked along so close to him that her hips touched his. Still she had not yet accustomed herself to giving him her arm; her steps were shorter than his; she made two to one. Thereupon Lucien would shorten his stride while she lengthened hers, and they taught themselves to walk together. Sometimes Andrée bent her head on one side and let her cheek rest upon her lover's shoulder

All the needful formalities had been accomplished, and they were to be married on the following Saturday. They had obtained their certificates of birth, and the consent of Madame Despretz, and Lucien was fortunately exempted from military service. On the Sunday preceding the wedding the two families went to spend the day in the woods of Meudon; and when the lamps of Paris shone out upon the horizon, they descended to the terrace of the château and gazed upon the valley full of light. The view stretched over the nocturnal splendor of the superb city. The sinuous line of the quays, the broken line of the fortifications, were in turn illuminated. A soft radiance ascended toward the sky over the boulevards and round about the opera house and the Bourse, while the massive towers of Notre Dame, the twin spires of Sainte Clotilde and the campanila of the Pantheon grew indistinct in the dark expanse. The gilded dome of the Invalides alone was prominent, with its pointed apex, and arched framework scintillating with luminous vibration.

It was ten o'clock when Lucien and Andrée separated at the Naviels' door; and early the next morning the young fellow returned to see his betrothed. A few minutes afterward the house-porter came up-stairs with a letter, which he handed to the young girl. The address was written in an irregular hand, which she did not recognize. However she opened the envelope, and found that it contained a short note, worded as follows: "I have learned that you wished to die. How dearly you must love him! You are right in doing so, for he is worthy of you. I myself am going. I have confided to Maître Redoul, notary, a deed by which I bequeath you three millions of francs. You will find it at his office. You can accept this dowry from a friend, who will soon only need a little soil. Before long I shall

have returned to the spirit land. Good-by — Be happy! Such is the last thought, the last wish of one who loved you, without evil thought or forbidden hope." The signature was in Sanscrit characters.

When Andrée had read the letter she handed it to Lucien, saying "I cannot inherit from a man who is alive. What do you think of it, Lucien?"

He perused the rajah's letter in turn, and answered: "Since this man is dead for you, Andrée, you can accept his gift. You can have no other interest than affection in preferring me to the rajah. If you refused the gift, you would seem to doubt of my faith in you."

"So be it then! We will decide."

One of her dreams was about to be realized. She would be able to ensure the happiness of her adoptive parents, of Lucien and his mother. She darted into the work-room, crying: "Mother, little mother, read this." She held the open letter above her head, and her delight sparkled in her eyes. She would have liked to see the rajah to thank him. She would have liked to see him happy also — he who assured the happiness of others. But it was impossible, since she did not love him. He was too good and too handsome, perhaps, and also too cold with his pure friendship. So he must disappear, misunderstood like some being of etherial nature. His love for Andrée was not a passion but a fraternal friendship. The flesh of this man of the East had seemingly not even quivered in presence of this youthful beauty, arrived at the puberty of heart and senses. He was not even jealous of the rival who was preferred to himself, and so in Andrée's estimation he did not really love her. She had remained ignorant of all the internal struggles of this high-minded man, who, above everything else, wished to see her happy. She did not know that his heart's blood had flowed drop by drop in the frightful battle between mind and flesh, between will and passion; that infinite love alone had enabled him to conquer himself; that he was mortally wounded and was really dying. Each day he spat a little of his life, and his embroidered handkerchief was red with the blood he wiped away from his lips.

But in Andrée's joyful effusion, thought of the rajah's fate left barely a shadow upon her brow. She loved Lucien Despretz — less generous than the Hindu, less gifted morally, but in her eyes more of a man. And she, Andrée, was a woman to the tips of her little almond-shaped nails, to the lobes of her shell pink ears.

As Madame Naviel remarked that it would be necessary to make inquiries at the notary's, the young girl hastily dressed, so as to profit by Lucien's offer to accompany her before going to his work. The notary happened to live in the vicinity, and at eleven o'clock they reached his office. Lucien asked one of the clerks for Maître Redoul.

"He is occupied," replied the clerk in question, a little shrill-voiced, bald-headed old fellow, who raised his spectacles from his eyes, and slipped his pen behind his right ear before attending to the visitors.

"And the chief clerk?"

"The chief clerk is out," resumed the scribe, who proportioned his politeness to the scarcely stylish appearance of his questioner.

However, Andrée, who felt impatient, hastily exclaimed: "I must ask you, sir, to be kind enough to inform your employer that I am entitled to a sum of three million francs, which I believe he holds on trust for me, together with the deed of gift."

The clerk sprang up as if impelled by a spring, and his eyes dilated as he gazed with respectful admiration on Andrée Naviel. These three million francs which she spoke about so quietly had galvanized the little man. His eyelids quivered for a moment, as he examined the young girl, like an astronomer contemplating a new planet, and then he hastened into the private room of Maître Redoul, who shortly afterward came to receive Andrée with a diplomatic smile on his face. He ushered her the first into his private room, and Lucien afterward. "Is this gentleman your brother, mademoiselle?" he asked with a knowing air.

"No, sir, my betrothed," replied Andrée, with a gentle pride.

"I congratulate him, mademoiselle."

The notary had the act in a drawer and he read it in a loud, clear voice, carefully articulating each syllable in the hope of making the legal phraseology intelligible. Then, when Andrée had shown him the rajah's letter, he handed her the document. "I have the securities at your disposal, mademoiselle," he said. "And whenever you desire it I will send them to your residence. I am quite at your orders to execute any transactions, or make any investments which you may desire." And with old fashioned gallantry, he added: "For whatever concerns the notarial profession I place my old experience at your feet."

Andrée thanked him with a smile, put the deed in her pocket, and left the room, giving her arm to Lucien. The notary escorted her as far as the street door, and when she passed through the outer office all the clerks rose up and bowed to her, ranged in a line.

While Lucien and Andrée were thus engaged at the notary's, Madame Despretz sat in her little parlor, mending one of her son's office coats. Hearing a ring at the bell she went to open the door and found Luc standing on the mat. "You!" she exclaimed. "Am I already revenged, then?"

"Not yet, but it depends on yourself. You have only to say a word to send the Marquis D'Albigny to the galleys."

"Explain yourself!"

"Well, this is the situation: The noble Marquis D'Albigny — whom the thunder of heaven confound — related the other day, while I was listening to him, that he had commenced his disgraceful exploits when he was yet very young. And he related — what funny coincidences there are in life, all the same! — and he related, I say, that several years ago he had paid his attentions to a very pretty girl who was employed at a glove shop in the Passage de l'Opéra, and who lived with her parent at Asnières."

Madame Despretz turned rather paler. "Well, what interest can this story have for me?" she asked.

"Wait a moment and you shall see. The girl in question was young and pretty as I have had the honor to tell you, only, she was well conducted, well conducted like the little virgin that she was. This greatly worried the noble marquis, who was then one or two-and-twenty, and already in possession of his patrimony. So after courting the charming girl——"

"Once more how can this scoundrel's story interest me?"

"Wait just one moment longer. This fellow, D'Albigny, a scoundrel as you very justly say — a thoroughly good-for-nothing fellow in short — courted the girl for three weeks or so, waiting for her at the end of the Passage de l'Opéra every evening until she left the shop. Well, one fine winter evening, when the snow was falling as thickly as if the Holy Virgin had plucked all the geese in Paradise, this kind and noble marquis, who had a vehicle in readiness, and who had previously given a handsome gratuity to the driver, almost forced little Adèle Despretz inside. For the funniest part of the affair is that this girl's name was Adèle Despretz, just like your own. Well, the beauty did her best to cry out, she called for help, and begged and prayed and threatened. But it was all of no use. The marquis didn't need assistance, and in the result — some months afterward a child was born. Do you understand my meaning, Adèle?"

"I don't understand why you should come here to reveal the atrocities perpetrated by a man whom I have other reasons for despising and hating."

"No doubt; and whenever you like I am prepared to believe that there is a mere similarity of name between you and the Adèle Despretz I speak of — for I never knew you in a glove shop in the Passage de l'Opéra. Only, don't you think we might utilize the similarity of name?"

"How and why?"

"Why? Well, so that your son may marry, so that my daughter may live, since she tries to kill herself when the engagement is broken off, poor, loving little thing that she is!

And you ask how? Well, in passing yourself off as the Adèle Despretz whom the honorable Marquis D'Albigny violated one evening on leaving the Passage de l'Opéra."

"What! I do such a thing as that? Never!"

"Then your son is our son, Adèle?"

"You never acknowledged my son by any legal act, did you? So you are nothing to him!"

"Heaven preserve him from any such acknowledgment, the poor fellow. Really now, he would be nicely off if I acknowledged him in my position. It is better to be nobody's son than to be the son of such a fellow as Face-to-Smack. I love your son too much to acknowledge him, it suffices that he is your child. However, you won't say what I ask?"

"Never! Their marriage certificate will set forth that their fathers are unknown. Poor children, may they be happier than I have been!"

"And than I! Well, if you think it can be arranged that way I don't care; it would be better, certainly. A little while ago I thought I had a son and a daughter, and now it seems that I am nobody's father at all — all the same, I regret that it wasn't you whom the marquis——"

"You are mad!"

"No, no, I had my plan; but no matter, I will do for him yet. The principal thing is for the children to marry. If there is any bother at the wedding, if, as I fear, Andrée's mother tried to intervene, I think I should strangle her."

"She wouldn't dare go alone, and D'Albigny won't accompany her, for he can scarcely care to find himself in presence of Monsieur Naviel. Men like the marquis are only audacious with the weak; they are cowardly with the strong. Besides, if Nana dares to go to the mayor's office, I shall tell the truth and cry out aloud that she only wishes to prevent the wedding so as to sell her daughter to her own lovers."

"And I, too, have arms against her; and I will be your ally in the battle, do you hear me, Adèle Despretz? I have a pardon to win; I wish to change my skin, and become again what I was, so as to be worthy of you, Adèle. You promised to pardon me; so allow me to ask for the honor of supporting you in your old age, of being the father of your son — your husband in fact — your husband, Adèle, if you will ——"

While the old mountebank spoke, he had taken the old woman's wrinkled hands between his long bony fingers. She did not withdraw them but remained silent, plunged in bitter thought. Then falling on his knees before her, his heart full of real grief and sincere repentance, feeling honest love born anew within him and purifying his nature, Luc stammered out amid his sobs: "I promise you I will become a man again — I promise you I will try to find some honest work. Don't engage yourself

to me, let me re-cast, re-make myself. I shall become honest and serious again, and I will love you, my poor old dear, as I loved you before I met that strumpet Nana. But give me the time, for I wish to revenge you on her, and settle that scoundrel the marquis."

"What is the use of it? Let them be. Leave the house. That woman is almost ruined, people say; old age and poverty will revenge me quite enough. As for the man, I hope he will be caught in one of his swindles ——"

Luc sprang to his feet again. "And I hope it as well," he said. "Well, till Saturday! That will be the great day. I shall be at the wedding, for I want to witness my daughter's happiness; and if Nana tries to speak I shall have the means of shutting her mouth. So till Saturday, then, at the mayor's — and I hope we shall soon go there on our own account." With these words he put on his hat and gravely took his leave.

Shortly afterward Lucien Despretz came home. "Do you know what has happened?" he asked his mother, as he kissed her.

"No, tell me at once what you refer to. I am worn out with thinking."

"Andrée has come into possession of three millions."

"Then she does not mean to marry?"

"Excuse me, mother."

"Marry you?"

"No doubt."

"And do you accept the money which falls no one knows whence, or from whom?"

"I accept it because I know it is spotless. Besides, Andrée feared so much that I might be displeased that she wanted to refuse the gift."

"And did you encourage her to accept it?"

"I know that Andrée loves me — and that is all I want. She has given me proof enough of it."

"Well, I will say nothing more, the rest is your affair."

Madame Despretz sat down again near the window and resumed her sewing. Her white hair and spotless cap stood out in full relief, in the oblique light falling from above. Her pale face had the serenity of one of these saintly portraits, scarcely distinguishable in shadowy chapels, but the eyes of which follow you with vacant fixity.

Her bony hands were wrinkled, and her fingers, the nails of which were worn by daily toil, bore the marks of assiduous obstinate work. As a rule, when Lucien came home of an evening it was he who lighted the fire and prepared the supper while his mother continued sewing. But now when she heard him blowing the charcoal fire in the kitchen with a pair of bellows, she hastily called out: "Leave that, my boy, leave all that; I will

go and attend to it. It's my business now. Besides my cooking won't take long when I'm alone."

"You will come and live with us, mother, and we will serve you and love you together. You will have two children in lieu of one.

"Oh! I shan't do that. As your wife is rich and I am poor it would look as if I were dependent on her."

"Andrée would never think that."

"But I should think it and I should feel humiliated. Do you see, my boy, lovers like solitude, and the presence of an old woman who no longer believes in love would chill your effusions. I don't want to bring coldness or discord into your home, and so I prefer to live and die alone."

"I won't dispute the point with you, mother, but I am sorry that you have such fancies," rejoined Lucien, as he laid the cloth in the dining-room.

The daylight was waning fast. Madame Despretz rose up, and walking softly across the room in her felt-soled slippers, she approached the open doorway to watch her Lucien. He was at this moment laying his mother's place, simple and kind-hearted as usual, ever intent on sparing her a task. To see him engaged in these petty household duties, no one would have believed in the sudden change of fortune that had befallen him. Madame Despretz thought of all the proofs of affection that he had given her, and asked herself with a feeling of jealous egotism what would become of her when he was married. Then almost immediately afterward, she reproached herself with the narrowness of heart which impelled her to be Andrée's rival, and the resolution of self-sacrifice gained the mastery in her mind.

At this moment, as Lucien chanced to raise his head, he saw his mother leaning against the door and watching him, her eyes moist with resigned tenderness. He divined so much courageous abnegation, so much sublime forgetfulness of self in the painful expression of her eyes, that he went towards her, and, taking hold of her hands, exclaimed with affectionate authority: "I can't allow you to be sad, mother, when I am happy."

Then raising herself on tiptoes Madame Despretz clasped her fingers behind his neck, and drawing his face down to her lips she kissed him, replying: "You bad fellow! How can your happiness make me sad! You shall have her, your Andrée, you shall have her. And if any one tried to take her from you, I would sacrifice everything to defend her; yes, everything." As the old woman spoke she drew back to gaze upon her son again, and her face assumed the radiant expression of martyrdom.

CHAPTER XL.

ANDRÉE NAVIEL'S sudden change of fortune did not modify the preliminaries of the wedding. Everything was of charming simplicity; and on the evening before the ceremony the two families dined together quietly at Batignolles. Andrée and Lucien had appointed M. Naviel manager of some house property which they had purchased in Paris, and Madame Naviel had taken a shop on the Boulevard des Italiens in view of extending her artificial-flower business. As for the young couple, they did not make any alterations in their mode of life for the time being, but it was arranged that they should go away together on the evening of the wedding and remain for a month at the seaside.

The evening that they all spent at Batignolles was almost a farewell reunion. After dinner Madame Naviel served the coffee in the parlor, and Andrée, having sent for the work-girls, informed them that in future her mother would manage the business with the assistance of Margot; she added that in honor of her wedding they would each receive a present of a hundred francs. After these good tidings she dismissed them, but not without inviting them to the wedding dinner. Then she decided to prepare her toilet for the morrow. She had not removed her wedding-dress from the wardrobe since that terrible night when in her despair she had chosen it for a shroud. As she left the parlor she made a sign to Lucien and added: "Come!"

He rose and followed her. She stretched her skirt of white faille over an arm-chair so as to take out the creases. Lucien assisted her; and it was he who laid the bodice over the back of the chair, bringing the sleeves forward. Andrée amused herself by watching him, and was astonished to see how well he understood these little matters. "Is your dress-coat ready?"* she asked him.

"Yes; it is the first dress-coat I have ever had made. My mother says that it fits me very well, but I don't entirely rely upon her taste in what concerns me; she always finds me superb, and looks at me with absolute indulgence. But perhaps my wife will be more severe."

"I shall perhaps be severe for your coat or your tailor, but never for you."

"I know that love is blind. That is perhaps a reason why my dear little wife should see clearly."

She gave him a reproachful glance. "You ought not to say that here," she answered, "before this dress which I turned

*As a general rule, French bridegrooms are attired in evening dress.—(TRANS.)

into a shroud, and before this bed where you saw me lying almost dead on account of you."

She had bought a pair of high-heeled, white-satin boots which she now deposited in front of the arm-chair; and then over the skirt she stretched the white-silk stockings which she had already worn on the night she had meant to kill herself. The wedding-gifts were few in number, but they were all exquisitely tasteful. Lucien offered Andrée an enamelled watch on the case of which the initials of their Christian names were entwined in pearls, a brooch forming a diamond rose, a pair of earrings of similar design, a ring, and finally a serpent bracelet with scales of emeralds and ruby eyes. Andrée, on her side, had given Lucien a pair of sleeve-links, ornamented with sapphires of considerable size and value.

It was a delightful May evening, and the first heat of the year was wafted through the open casement. Lucien leant over the balustrade of this window which he had gazed upon in such anguish but a couple of weeks previously, and the various incidents of that dreadful night were presented in succession to his mind. By the light of a street-lamp near the railway station, he could distinguish the spot where he had spent so many hours in agony. All the ideas which had then darted through his brain like poisoned arrows returned and troubled him. He felt a pang at his heart, and his knees shook. He asked himself how he had been able to support such frightful, moral suffering, without dashing out his brains, and the memory of this terrible crisis made him tremble to such a degree that his teeth chattered. He did not hear Andrée, who surprised by his silence, now drew near to him, but he started as she laid her hand upon his shoulder, "What is my Lucien thinking of?" she asked; "he is as silent as if he were sad this evening."

"Ask me rather whom I am thinking of, or ask me nothing. I was looking at the railway railing — at the spot where I was so tortured for hours a fortnight ago, when I watched the light in your window. And you, darling, while I was dying of anguish on the pavement, you were agonizing here, alone. Ah! we were very mad, were we not?"

"Yes, yes, very mad."

"And yet, suppose that for some reason or another our marriage became impossible, that at the last moment an obstacle arose, an unconquerable obstacle — that we could not be married in fact — what should we do then?"

"We would leave the rajah's millions to our parents, and go and drown ourselves in the sea," rejoined Andrée simply; and as she spoke of dying with her lover, a gleam of feverish energy flashed from her eyes.

"Yes, yes, both together," said Lucien.

"I have sometimes thought of that kind of death," resumed

Andrée. "I once saw the sea at Le Hâvre. I should prefer to sleep in the blue waves rather than in a coffin, for in the sea nothing would separate us."

"Well, yes: we would do as you say; we would go off alone, to some rugged shore, some deserted spot, and at night time, so as not to be disturbed. You would be mine before we died, and we would fasten ourselves together solidly — then holding each other in a close embrace we would throw ourselves into the water, Andrée, and our last sigh would be a kiss."

"I should prefer such a death a thousand times to living without you!"

"Ah! how long it is, a night and a day — so many things can happen."

"Listen, Lucien, if we are determined on it no human power, no power of heaven or hell, can separate us. We must swear to die together, as we have said, if any obstacle should arise, if my unatural mother should have any weapon against our happiness, if any infamy or fatality should wreck our ho s at the final moment."

"I swear it," said Lucien Despretz, "I swear it on the honor of my saintly mother, whose life has been one of devotion to me."

"And I swear it my love for you, Lucien."

They each raised an arm toward the sky where their familiar star was shining with a greenish brilliancy like Andrée's eyes; and then Lucien, catching his well-beloved in a powerful though chaste embrace, pressed her to his heart with reverent respect. And leaning toward her he hid his burning face in her warm abundant hair. "Oh, Andrée, Andrée, Andrée," he murmured amid the silky curls, "Andrée, I love you better than aught else."

They were interrupted by a prolonged sigh, and as Lucien turned his head, he perceived his mother. "I heard you," she said; "you love her better than aught else, and you will die together if the wedding is prevented. 'Tis well, 'tis well, 'tis well." And then raising her thin hands above her head with a grievous gesture, she stammered, checking a sob by an effort of proud will: "O God! I have nought left to me but Thee!"

Lucien wished to take her in his arms with his betrothed to unite them in the same affectionate embrace, but she softly repulsed him and said, resignedly: "I don't complain, my lad, it was bound to be thus. I will leave you alone." And she then rejoined the Naviels in the parlor.

Then they forgot themselves in making happy plans, their minds at ease since they had sworn to die together. They felt as if they were already married, and in the enjoyment of mutual possession. They mentally anticipated their happiness. Lucien

did not breathe any unseemly word or reveal aught unduly, and yet he wished to make Andrée understand the full extent of sacrifice which love imposes on a woman, he wished that she might realize what self-abandonment her promise would entail. She partly understood him, and blushed for having done so. And to hide her blushes from him she turned her face toward the night. So that was marriage? What solemn, charming mystery, what delight awaited her! She trembled, and felt almost afraid at being thus alone with Lucien. It seemed to her as if he were going to carry her down into an abyss. A feeling of intense timidity rose from her heart to her face, and weighed upon her long chaste eyelids. She no longer dared to meet her lover's glance. She could see him through her silky lashes, and felt an unknown warmth pass throughout her system, bending her knees and oppressing her virgin bosom.

At this moment a nightingale poised itself on one of the chestnut trees in the square; and amid the nocturnal peacefulness they heard a pure trill rise through the air like a winged vibration, then a velvety note was prolonged, a scale rang out like a peal of clear youthful laughter, ending in a vocal flourish of exquisite delicacy. There came a pause; and then the crystalline voice was raised anew, modulating with infinite art, a strain full of melancholy passion. But suddenly the feathered songster ceased his lay. The whistle of a railway engine broke upon the silence, seemingly spreading as it grew nearer. The huge steam-horse appeared round the curve of the line under the iron bridge which leads to the Batignolles Station. For a moment the train stopped. The black funnel puffed precipitately, its smoke rising like breath from the depths of the cutting into the lighted street — dense and fluffy at first, but dispersing as it rose and mingling with the atmosphere above the houses. Then, as the passengers had alighted on the platform, one heard the signal of the station-master, which the engine whistle answered like a formidable echo. The wheels began to revolve slowly at first, and soon the whole train was in motion, journeying onward at increasing speed. Lucien and Andrée saw the carriages pass along one after another, many an unknown face flitting by in the lighted compartments which, in turn, disappeared from view under the dark vault of the tunnel. Then silence reigned once more around the square, where the dark foliage of the horse-chestnut trees grew indistinct amid the mist which was now slowly gliding over the dewy expanse of the lawns, in phantom-like procession. The winged songster had fled off afar into the peace of the woods where everything is hushed to listen to him.

Andrée reflected that on the morrow she also would journey to unknown happiness in an unknown land. It seemed to her that she was about to leave the world and fly on the wings of

the nightingale to a land of celestial melody and infinite love. Something passionate and saintly, chaste and troublous, a supreme, yet timid ardor took possession of her whole being. She gazed on the man she loved by the light of the lamp which lent a flame-like brilliancy to his short hair, and illumined his thin profile. Lucien Despretz was the perfect type of masculine comeliness in her eyes. He pleased her such as he was. She needed all her proud will not to throw her arms around his neck and cover him with endless kisses. And he! He was thinking that he would soon be free to carry her away like something belonging to him, to tell her all that he had not yet dared to tell her, to teach her everything, to kiss her little feet, and hold her in a tight embrace. And as he anticipated in his mind the promised delight soon to be realized, he felt a very vertigo of joy lift him up and carry him away through days, and months, and years, of which he was no longer conscious.

But he was suddenly roused from his dream by Andrée, who uttered an exclamation, and pointed with her forefinger to the Rue de Rome. A tall, slight, shadowy form was approaching swiftly beside the railway railing. "Look over there," said Andrée to Lucien.

"Yes, there is a man passing."

"Don't you recognize him?"

"Not at all."

"It is Luc coming here! Nana is plotting some new infamy against us."

"What of that? We can take refuge in our oath!"

"Don't let us stop alone!" pleaded Andrée, with a shudder. "I feel afraid."

Shortly afterwards Luc rang the bell. The two families were reassembled in the parlor. It was M. Naviel who went to open the door for the valet, who, after hanging his hat on a peg, went into the sitting-room. He bowed respectfully to Madame Naviel and Madame Despretz, and then, approaching Lucien, he took his hand and said: "So it is for to-morrow? Be on your guard. There will be a fight, for the marquis will be there and Madame Nana also."

"We shall all be there," interrupted Pierre Naviel, "and so much the worse for your marquis if he tries to create a disturbance! He has been warned once already. I don't suppose that it is he who sent you here?"

"No, I have come on my own account. I thought that I should find you all together this evening, including a person whom I particularly wish to speak with. It is to you, Madame Adèle Despretz, that I should like to say a word or two in private. It is a question of your son's happiness, of clipping the nails and filing the teeth of a man you know, and of a

woman who wishes to profit by what you told her to prevent the wedding and separate our young folks for good."

"Come into the work-room, we shall be alone there," replied Madame Despretz.

She opened the door and passed out the first. Luc followed her, but in the work-room they found Margot, who was finishing a garland of orange blossom for the bodice of Andrée's dress. "Leave us alone for a moment, my girl," said Madame Despretz.

However, Margot asked permission to finish her work; she did not need another five minutes, she said, and the garland must be completed that evening. When the last leaf had been set in its place, she rose in silence, and went round the room so as to avoid Luc, who always inspired her with a feeling of repulsion. She entered the parlor carrying the garland in her hand, for she wished to try its effect round Andrée's waist. The young girl thanked her, and taking the pretty, white flowers in her fingers she laid them on the table beside the jewel cases brought by Lucien, and said to Margot: "I shall always keep this garland in memory of you, my girl."

"Ah! what can I do to thank you, mademoiselle?" asked Margot, in a voice full of feeling. "I was very wicked toward you, and I have been severely punished. But you are so good, mademoiselle; and, instead of letting me rot in the filth you found me in, you did not hesitate to go to my hovel to take me away from it. And on the day of the review, too, you remonstrated with the man who is now talking to Madame Despretz. Whenever I see him I always feel a shiver right down my back."

"Never mind about that, Margot, you are a good girl. I always thought that you would become one again, and that was why I took you with us. I can promise you a position if you continue to answer my anticipations, which are altogether in your favor."

"You are very kind, Mademoiselle Andrée; but I have something to do, and I fear I shall have to leave Madame Naviel to go to prison." Margot spoke these words with a black look and an evil gleam in her eyes; and then hastily added: "Good-night, ladies and gentlemen all."

She had just gone up to her attic when Luc and Madame Despretz returned into the parlor. Lucien's mother was extremely pale, and her smile had that painful contraction which indicates resignation to fate. She had evidently been crying, for her eyelids were very red. Her poor hands, spoiled by work, hung down against her black dress, painfully emaciated, and deadly white with prominent blue veins.

"Are you suffering, mother?" asked Lucien and Andrée in the same breath.

"No, my children, it is over," she answered, with a sigh.

"Come, my friends, to-morrow means happiness or misery," exclaimed Luc. "It all hangs on a thread. At what time shall you be at the mayor's?"

"At noon precisely."

"Very good. I will be punctual." And looking at the young couple, seated side by side, he said to them with feeling gravity: "Always love each other as you do now, little ones — for do you know, despite all that people say, love is the only true thing in life. But I must be off. Until to-morrow!" And he abruptly hastened out of the room.

CHAPTER XLI.

At noon on the morrow an attendant ushered the Naviels, the Despretzes and their witnesses into the room set apart for the celebration of marriages at the Batignolles municipal offices. Lucien had invited two clerks belonging to the newspaper office, where he was employed; and M. Naviel had secured the services of the doctor who had attended Andrée and of one of his colleagues of the Western Railway line. Andrée and Lucien sat down side by side awaiting the mayor, who had not yet arrived. Near by Andrée's work-girls were standing. A chilly silence reigned in the room; but out of doors a sudden blast swept by literally howling as it shook the window panes. Night seemed descending from the sky across which a party of rooks flew cawing, and the large white bust of the Republic was barely distinguishable against the green-wall hangings. At last the mayor, wearing his tricolor sash of office, came forward gravely. The bridal pair rose to their feet, and the simple ceremony began. The mayor read the articles of the code concerning the duties and obligations of matrimony, explaining their sense and bearings in a short address. Then he asked the usual questions. Turning at first to Lucien he said: "Do you consent to take Mademoiselle Andrée Naviel for your wedded wife?"

"Yes, sir," answered Lucien, in a loud voice.

The magistrate next asked Andrée a similar question respecting Lucien, and she quietly gave an affirmative reply. The mayor then began to pronounce the customary formula, "In the name of the law, I declare you to be ——"

"Excuse me, sir!" at this moment cried a bitter voice, proceeding from the doorway, "but I oppose this marriage!" And, followed by Lue and giving her arm to the Marquis D'Albigny, Nana entered the room with a haughty step. She was arrayed in a robe of blue plush with a long train behind, and flounces of point d'Angleterre in front. Six massive gold

bracelets spanned her writs, and two emerald bees with diamon wings sparkled in her ears.

"Who are you, madame?" asked the mayor.

"I am the bride's mother, sir. The parents who figure here are spurious ones, and this is the proof of it." So saying she handed the mayor the letter which set forth that Andrée had been left at the Foundling Hospital in the Rue d'Enfer, on the 14th of August, 1860, according to the instructions of the commissary of police of the district where she, Nana, then resided, that the deposit had been effected by Virginie, the said Nana's maid, and finally that Andrée had been handed over to Pierre Naviel, a mechanic, residing in the Rue Crozatier, on the 20th of the same month.

The mayor read this communication attentively and then asked, "Is Monsieur Pierre Naviel here?"

"Yes, sir," replied Andree's adoptive father. It was I who brought up the young girl with my wife's assistance, and if we are spurious parents I should like to know what can be thought of the real mother."

"Are you the woman Nana?" asked the mayor, turning to the courtesan.

"Of course I am. You must know me at least by name."

"Well, I must inform you that in accordance with the law you have forfeited all rights over your daughter. Besides, the commissary whom you applied to cannot have left you in doubt upon the matter. He must have warned you that in abandoning your child you relinquished all your rights over her, that the Poor Relief Board became her legal guardian, absolutely as if she were an orphan and you were dead."

"I have no recollection of it, sir. I was so young at the time that I was quite unaware of what I was really doing when I abandoned my child. But now I know what one suffers on seeing one's own flesh and blood in the hands of such a mercenary set." And so speaking she stretched out her hand toward Naviel.

He rose to his feet with his eyes blazing like live coals. "I think," said he, striking his broad chest with his fist, "that an honest workman is better able to rear a child properly than a woman who trades on vice."

"Don't answer that woman, Monsieur Naviel," said the mayor; and then turning to the courtesan again, he added: "The commissary of your district must also have warned you that by the hospital regulations you would not be allowed to see your daughter or learn what had become of her. I am very astonished therefore that the authorities should have written such a letter, which is in direct contradiction with their own rules."

He thereupon returned Nana the letter, which she placed in

her pocket, saying, "Well, sir, since my consent signifies nothing, I have merely a declaration to make and I fancy you will take it into consideration."

"Speak," said the mayor.

For a moment Nana seemed to reflect. The darkness had become so great that one of the ushers was lighting the gas. A painful silence oppressed the lookers on. The wind alone raised its voice with a prolonged howl as it swept past outside. A shutter was slammed to with such force that the rust-eaten hook parted, breaking a window pane, the fragments of which fell upon the floor. Then the blast rushed in, throwing the folding doors back with a bang, and extinguishing the gas, so that the spacious room was plunged in gloomy darkness. Luc had drawn near to Madame Despretz, and Margot, whose right hand was hidden behind a corner of her shawl, had stationed herself erect just behind Andrée.

"Well," resumed Nana, biting her words so to say, "I affirm that this young man and this young girl are the children of the same father. To convince yourself of this, sir, it is only necessary for you to question Mademoiselle Adèle Despretz, who is here present. She will tell you that she never had but one lover, and this lover being the bride's father, as I have good reason to know, is also father of the bridegroom!" Nana finished with a burst of insolent laughter which rang throughout the lofty room.

Luc was begging Madame Despretz in a low voice: "Courage, Adèle, courage! You must tell the truth."

Lucien's mother rose up. Her eyes glanced round the room and then gazed with implacable fixity upon the Marquis D'Albigny. She stood rigid, pale, like a cloistered nun in the glimmer of the gas which an usher was lighting again. There was a moment of solemn expectancy. Outside the rain was now falling in torrents, beating noisily on the window panes. The light shed by the unpolished globes glided over the anxious faces around, casting golden radiance upon the brow of the courtesan, lending diaphanous pallidity to the veil of the bride — as beautiful as a vision of ideal love — and ascending to the bust of the Republic, which overlooked this drama with its vacant stare.

"I must ask your permission to make a public revelation, sir," said Madame Despretz to the mayor in a firm voice.

'Speak, madame."

"My son's father is not the man whom this person has spoken of."

"Really, my dear!" said Nana, "so you had several lovers then?"

"Let me continue, madame, I am not making this painful confession to you When I was very young I was courted for

some time by a handsome fellow of good birth who called himself a marquis and who tried all sorts of promises, and even swore to marry me so as to induce me to part with my only fortune, my honor. He seemed so sincere and frank, so affectionate and tender, that I loved him, but without consenting to what he asked."

Oppressed by her painful recollections, Adèle Despretz paused for a moment to collect her ideas and strengthen her resolution she had taken to sacrifice all her pride as a woman and a mother to her son's happiness. D'Albigny was gazing insolently at this martyr of maternal duty; but without allowing herself to be intimidated, she resumed: "I imprudently allowed this scoundrel to perceive the influence he exercised over my heart, and as he could not conquer my resolution to remain unmarried rather than take a lover, he set a trap for me; and when I defended myself against his violence, he stifled my cries with his handkerchief, seized me by the throat and almost throttled me. I lost consciousness — and thus he triumphed over my resistance. But in defending myself I inflicted upon him with my nails a wound of some depth of which he must still bear the mark, although five-and-twenty years have elapsed since then."

"Did you never know this man's name? Did you never make any charge against him?" asked the mayor.

"He had taken a false name to deceive me, sir, and I did not dare to complain even to my parents. And they drove me ignominiously out of doors, when I became a mother, and my lover abandoned me. But now that circumstances and a false statement have compelled me to make this confession, I recognize the scoundrel who dishonored me, and I denounce him to you so that you may have him arrested. There he stands!" And with a gesture as threatening as a sword thrust she pointed with her right hand to the Marquis D'Albigny.

Lucien Despretz, who was very pale, sprang from his place and shook his fist in D'Albigny's face. "Ah! I had forgotten you!" he cried, "but I will kill you, if you are not even more of a coward than I believe. I will kill you, do you hear?"

"Leave him, my son," said Adèle Despretz, "you cannot fight with your father!"

"All this," rejoined D'Albigny, with cold irony, "seems to be a skillfully planned and clever-acted comedy. Evidently enough, these honest folks have been plotting together to blackmail the Marquis D'Albigny; but the Marquis D'Albigny is not the man to allow himself to be blackmailed — do you hear, Monsieur Lucien, I — don't — know — what? Do you hear, madame, I — don't — know — whom? You pretend, I believe, that you were my mistress, but 'pon my word, I never had any taste for grand-

mothers, and if you are not an adventuress, my good woman, you must simply be a lunatic!"

Adèle Despretz walked, with her arms crossed, toward the marquis. "The proof that I spoke the truth — see, there it is!" she cried; and before D'Albigny could foresee her intention, she pulled off his necktie, and with feverish energy tore his collar apart. A scar, more than an inch long, was plainly visible on his neck. "There it is!" continued Madame Despretz, "see, there it is! Look, Monsieur Naviel, look, gentlemen, and you too, Lucien, the son of a coward, of a man who robs women of their honor — look, there is the mark left by the dishonored girl upon this jail-bird's neck."

"Oh! oh! madame!" exclaimed D'Albigny, turning pale with rage, "you are evidently quite mad, and I advise your estimable offspring to have you bled for —"

But he stopped short. A long hand had fallen upon his coat collar, and on turning his head he saw his valet, Luc, standing behind him. The expression of the ex-clown's ashy face had suddenly changed. An implacable, sinister purpose shone in his eyes, which were flaming like those of some bird of prey: "In the name of the law I arrest you, Marquis d'Albigny!" he cried.

"You! And by what right?"

"Because you are guilty of the crime to which this poor woman fell a victim; and I know it, for you betrayed yourself, marquis, by relating the story to your unworthy accomplice, in my hearing. I also know that you attempted to sequestrate Mademoiselle Andrée Naviel, and that you and Madame Nana, her mother, formed odious plans respecting her, which only failed thanks to me."

"All this is false!" cried the marquis, "and I don't acknowledge your right to arrest me. So release your hold, or I will break your back over that bench."

"If you want a helping hand, comrade," said Pierre Naviel, approaching the two men, "I'm here to give it. The marquis is acquainted with my hold, already."

"There must be an end to all this," interrupted the mayor. "I cannot tolerate acts of violence here."

"I am only doing my duty, sir," rejoined Luc. "I belong to the detective service. Here is my card."

"Ah! very good; then have this man locked up at once."

Two policemen in uniform immediately entered the room and seized hold of D'Albigny. All the scoundrel's arrogance vanished in a moment. Pale and with trembling knees he allowed himself to be led away like a child. His teeth were chattering with sudden cowardice. Nana, however, remained haughty in presence of this fall of unhallowed fortune and baffled audacity. She abruptly abandoned D'Albigny, and addressing herself to

the mayor: "I did not wish to denounce the marquis," she said, "but since he has already one rape on his conscience, I can confess the other for him; and it is my right to do so, as I am the victim's mother!"

"Nana! it's false! Be quiet!" cried D'Albigny, "you are ruining me." The policemen, at this moment, pushed him out of the room; but he could be heard on the stairs still shouting, "It's false! That woman lies!"

"And I — I say that it is the truth," resumed the courtesan, "and that the beautiful Andrée, called Naviel——"

Whilst she spoke Margot had silently drawn near to her, with her round eyes sparkling feverishly under their heavy lids. She still had her right hand hidden under the point of her shawl. "Take that, you beast!" she shouted, and with a sudden jerk she threw the contents of a flask of vitriol in Nana's face.

The harlot raised a terrible cry, fell backward and rolled upon the floor, giving vent to inarticulate shrieks. Two other policemen entered and carried her into the guard-room, while a third arrested Margot. The ceremony, which had been interrupted by these dramatic incidents, was then hastily concluded, and, the mayor having declared the young couple to be duly married, Lucien offered his arm to his wife, and they left the room, followed by their relatives and witnesses.

Andrée felt serene strength and confidence as she leaned on the arm of the man who would henceforth be her inseparable companion and friend. Nothing could ever more disturb her happy dream. Life was stretched out before her with a fair and smiling horizon. She had borne the insults and slander of her own mother with a calm disdain. She understood that Lucien's faith in her could never more be shaken.

Indeed all her future reposed upon a firm basis; the love of the man she loved. And at the thought that the horizon of her ardent youth would spread to the full compass of her desires, her whole being quivered with eager joy. She had come with calm bravery to face this battle which might have cost her her life. She had relied implicitly upon Lucien, confident in the oath which she had exchanged with him. That supreme resolution had lent her a proud, serious strength. She had resisted the advice of her infamous mother and escaped the snares set for her by the marquis; she had not listened to the yearnings of nature or to the passionate instincts of the temperament which she owed to her worthless mother.

The example of surrounding honesty had definitely assured the triumph of chaste resolve and virtuous education. And now she could follow the man she loved without false prudery or the timid shame of unconscious virtue. Had there been need for it she would have dipped her pen in her heart's blood

to sign the act by which she abandoned her being and consecrated her life to Lucien Despretz.

When she appeared on the steps outside the municipal offices, the crowd assembled in front of the railing could not restrain a murmur of admiration. Parted by the wind the clouds were speeding eastward like a flight of gloomy crows. The rain had ceased falling and a sun ray darted from between two cloudlets and beamed over Andrée's beauty.

The sudden effulgency lighted up her large green eyes and played over her long white veil, while a radiant, gentle smile parted her ruddy lips. She descended the steps leaning on her husband's arm, and in doing so displayed the tiny proportions of her feet and the feline grace of her walk. The crowd warmly applauded her as she passed along.

Scarcely had she taken her seat in the wedding carriage than a woman, whose head was bandaged up, and whose face was covered with lint, was carried by four policemen to a brougham waiting a short distance off. At intervals she gave vent to frightful shrieks, which filled the whole street around. Her carriage started off at a walk, followed by a band of pale urchins, who bawled aloud: "Serve her right! Serve her right!"

"Poor woman!" sighed Andrée, who was touched with emotion, and then she slowly took off her left glove to look at her wedding ring.

The cries of the courtesan could be heard growing fainter and fainter in the depths of the street. Lucien saw that Andrée was saddened by the terrible punishment which had overtaken her unnatural mother. He took her tiny bare hands in his and printed a long kiss on the tips of the pink fingers which the work of toilsome years had sanctified. Then as the whole wedding party was seated in the vehicles, the white horses, decked with ribbons, started off at a trot, and conveyed the bridal pair to the Naviels' home.

CHAPTER XLII.

NANA'S calamity proved irreparable. The vitriol burned her eyes so frightfully that each orbit was positively emptied. Her eyelids remained closed over the sightless cavities. Her nose had been eaten up by the corroding liquid, as if by a cancer, and the nasal apertures appeared like two black holes amid the ruddy callosity of her tumid face. Her upper lip, slit apart like a hare's lip, revealed her teeth which *caries* swiftly covered with yellow tartar. A brown leprosity, pitted with blue, spread all over her face, on which the smile of beauty had once

beamed, and a putrid stench was exhaled in sickening puffs by all the horrible sores from which the matter flowed.

Since D'Albigny's arrest and his accomplice's calamity, the mansion in the Avenue de Friedland had been abandoned by every one. Mulhausen, on examining the marquis' accounts, had discovered a large deficit, and had denounced his ex-partner to the Public Prosecutor. He had then vainly tried to manage the *Gazette* by himself, cutting down the staff of clerks, and the remuneration of the writers. But he had nevertheless been obliged to invest more money in this enterprise, which lacked vaiability from the outset. Demands for money rained upon him from all sides. D'Albigny had used up every method of getting into debt. Creditors became arrogant, subscribers refused further patronage, and newsvendors bundled the paper out of sight, or declared that they did not sell it to the few purchasers who chanced to ask for it. On June 15th the last number of the *Gazette des Coulisses* was issued. Mulhausen, dunned by his creditors, and without a hundred thousand francs left to him, fled from France to Germany, where his estates were on the point of being sold. Since Nana'a terrible adventure he had only been to the Avenue de Friedland on one occasion, and then to make sure if the lease was really in her name.

Nana, on her side, closed her doors to every one, and absolutely refused to see the prince when he called. In the midst of intolerable physical suffering, she also found herself besieged by creditors whom she was unacquainted with, by bills falling she knew not whence, by drafts which sprung up out of the earth, by promissory notes, the signature of which she could not verify owing to her horrible ecoity. To face the many demands made upon her purse she successively entrusted all her jewelry to Virginie to pawn, and the maid profited by the occasion to set aside for her old age a considerable portion of the money which Nana thus raised on the remaining fragments of her wealth. On July 15th the courtesan could not collect the sum necessary for the payment of her rent. The servants, seeing ruin ahead, had already demanded their wages and left the house. Virginie alone remained, intent on securing the last available spoils of the fallen harlot. Tall and thin, with a nose like a crow's beak, crooked fingers, like vulture's claws, yellow, round eyes, black, frizzly hair, and a scraggy, wiry neck, she hovered about the courtesan like a bird of prey about a carcass. A week later Nana received a lawyer's summons to pay her landlord the sum of six thousand francs due for the July quarter, under penalty of being forced to do so by all legal means, and notably by the seizure of her furniture and personal effects. When Virginie read her the summons she flew into a hideous fit of rage; she sprang out of her bed, in which the running sores of her face had hitherto kept her in agony, and, bounding almost naked

over the carpet, she darted blindly here and there, until reaching a chair of gilt beechwood she hurled it into space. It struck a Louis XV. mirror, cracked it, and fell broken on the floor. Then seized, in her despair, with a mad desire to destroy everything, Nana rushed right and left, breaking the furniture and tearing down the hangings. She even smashed one of the window panes with her fist, which was badly cut by the broken glass.

"Madame has gone mad," said Virginie, who stood watching her with her arms crossed.

"Ah! you say that I am mad!" cried the courtesan in a quivering voice. "Ah! you say that I am mad! Well, you shall just see." And springing upon her maid, she caught her by the hair and threw her backward upon the bed; then, lowering her own hideous, putrescent face, she bit Virginie on the neck with the ferocity of a wild beast.

The maid gave vent to a cry of indescribable agony and horror. Calmed now that she had satisfied her bestial cruelty, Nana let her go; and Virginie retreated to the door, exclaiming; "Since that is the way that madame rewards me for my fidelity I'm going to take myself off, for good."

This threat brought the prospect of absolute abandonment and utter solitude before the harlot's mind: and throwing herself in front of Virginie to intercept her, "No, stay, don't abandon me," she begged. "I should die of hunger without you. What could I do in my position?"

"That's no business of mine. Madame is very ungrateful to treat me as she has done, and she had better look for another maid."

"Where can I look for one? I am alone, abandoned by every one, blind—where can I go, tell me? But I feel that you only tell me this so as to obtain better wages. I will double them."

"How? Madame hasn't five napoleons left in the whole house."

"I will sell my horses."

"They are sold already, madame."

"I will sell my furniture."

"It belongs to the landlord."

"My jewels!"

"All pawned, all at my uncle's, madame."

"My dresses——"

"They are the landlord's, just like the furniture. For the moment madame is quite stripped, and, in her present state, it is hardly probable that she will find any one to——"

"But, come, you can't leave me like this, Virginie, my little Virginie. You have made your fortune with me; yes, you have really made your fortune. Well, if you won't stay for what I

may be able to give you, stay, stay out of friendship. I was always kind to you."

"Madame is mistaken when she says that I have made my fortune in her service. I have always looked after her interests to the detriment of my own."

"No matter, you will stay out of friendship for your old friend, Nana, you will stay, won't you, my good Virginie? What would become of me without you?"

As she spoke like this, begging Virginie to stay, not to abandon her, not to leave her to die of hunger, the once proud, disdainful courtesan, the fallen queen of vice, the whilom empress of beauty, now so monstrously hideous, tried to speak in the caressing tone of yore, but even her voice had changed. The absence of an upper lip made her lisp and stutter grotesquely. She held Virginie's hand in her own, which trembled with fear at the thought of remaining alone in this house, which the lawyers were about to strip, and whence the landlord would drive her out into the street, hideous, eyeless, dying of hunger, reduced to implore the pity of policemen, and to seek a refuge at the Dépôt of the prefecture, among the pack of jades, sluts, and street walkers, in stinking misery and bestial vice.

"I have told madame what I had to say," said Virginie. "I cannot continue serving madame. I am free to dispose of myself, I suppose."

On hearing this, Nana, conquered by despair, fell on her knees at the feet of this dried-up, scraggy girl, and yellow tears oozed from between her eyelids, and coursed hideously ever her tumerous face. And sobbing, crushed, terrified, she cried: "Forgive me, forgive me, Virginie! That is what you want, is it not? You wish me to humiliate myself before you, and ask your pardon for having hurt you as I did, a little while ago? Well, you see I am on my knees, and I beg your forgiveness, my little Virginie!"

"I have no spite against madame, and I beg her to forgive *me*, for it is quite impossible for me to remain any longer with her."

Having said this very drily, Virginie tried to withdraw her hand which Nana was still holding. But she did not succeed, for the courtesan clung tightly to this last human being who had remained with her, like a shipwrecked mariner to a spar. "You really think of going?" she said. "Then I shall detain you despite yourself; I will shut you up in my room; you will be my prisoner."

"Ah! you end by bothering me! I haven't let myself out on lease, I suppose, and I have the right to leave a house, where my only wages are ill-treatment."

She again made an effort to free herself, but Nana clung despairingly to her skirts—"You shan't go," she vociferated.

The words came husky, crowding one upon the other. Her bosom heaved with fierce emotion, she was breathless with fright.

"I'm going, so release me."

"No."

Virginie was, in her turn, seized with a fit of rage. With her bony hands she caught hold of one of Nana's fingers and twisted it in her own until she felt it crack. Overcome by pain the courtesan let go of Virginie's skirt, and fell backward, fainting on the floor. Then the maid, furious, eager for revenge upon this sightless woman, whom she had felt so frightened of but a moment previously, caught up a stray boot and belabored her on the stomach and the legs. Kneeling upon the carpet she unfastened her hair — the supreme splendor, the one abiding remnant of former beauty, which lingered as a consolation to the harlot. Nana loved to cast it as a mantle over the horror of her face, to hide her ruin in the thick golden locks — the only gold that she possessed. It was her last delight to pass her tapering fingers through the warm, tawny silk. Virginie thought of this, and drew from her pocket a pair of scissors which she always carried about her. For a moment she contemplated this luxuriant hair, and amused herself by stretching the wavy folds over the carpet; then taking them between both of her hands, which were scarcely large enough for the purpose, she twisted them into a single coil and opened her scissors. At first the hair defended itself against destruction. The scissors were not sharp enough to cut through the compact mass. But Virginie patiently separated it into several locks, which she cut off one after the other, and then rolling the whole of the hair around her left arm, she carried it off like a trophy.

Shortly afterward Nana regained consciousness. She vainly tried to open her eyelids, but night weighed upon her, implacably, eternally. Dead to noontide, she was condemned to live like a phantom, conscious of light, and mourning for the sun.

"Virginie! Virginie!" she cried.

But heavy silence reigned in the rooms around. Afar, the hum and stir of out-door life could be distinguished, and she heard a clock striking. She recognized what clock it was; how often had she passed before the church where it was placed — reclining in her blue-tinted carriage, drawn by English trotters, driven by a coachman in her colors, and attended by a footman in knee breeches. "Virginie! Virginie!" she called again.

No answer! Nothing! The girl had gone!

However, Nana suddenly sprang to her feet again. She was astonished that her head should feel so light, and she instinctively raised her hands. Then, as she touched her skull, she gave vent to a cry of appalling, superhuman rage, which resounded throughout the empty house.

Although her feet were bare she began to wander up and down knocking against the walls and the furniture without noticing it, clinching her fists and setting her teeth, and bursting, at intervals, into hoarse shouts as she entered the reception rooms, where her voice awakened a deep echo and where she inhaled a smell of solitude, stagnant moisture, and moldliness, as if the leprosy of abandonment already covered the walls. Entering the dining-room she followed the waiscoting until she reached the sideboard. She was hungry, and felt a terrible apprehension lest she should not find even a bit of bread in the house — first pillaged and then abandoned by servants, friends, and parasites of every kind. She only found half a dozen glasses in the sideboard, and did not recognize them as hers when she tapped them with her thumb nail to make them ring. Plainly enough her service of Baccarat crystal — her Sèvres porcelain, decorated with her coronetted initial — had all gone. After this discovery she went down into the basement. The pantry was utterly empty; and merely a few dirty plates were lying on the fireless range in the kitchen.

Returning up-stairs she went into her dressing-room, over the floor of which a silk skirt was trailing. On feeling along the wall she found that a dozen dresses or so were still hanging from the pegs. Dancing shoes, odd boots, and lace petticoats were strewn here and there, and a "*niniche*" bonnet lay upon a chair with its strings hanging down to the floor close to a couple of silk stockings of different colors and a black mantilla, which she wrapped over her head. She put on six of her best dresses, one over the other, a couple of stockings, and the first pair of boots she came across, dressing herself as well as she could.

The wound inflicted on her wrist when she had smashed the pane of glass, and the finger which Virginie had almost broken, caused her horrible suffering at each movement of her hands, and at intervals she felt shooting pains throughout her whole body. She knew where to find the key of the outside gate, so she took it, and for twenty minutes or so she waited on the threshold for an empty cab to pass along. A stranger, who was walking down the Avenue de Friedland, helped her into the vehicle, and she asked him to request the cabman to drive her to the Rue de Provence. It was there that La Saint Amand, who had relinquished fast living on her own account, and who now only served as a go-between in carrying on questionable intrigues, kept a second-hand clothes' shop. She did not recognize Nana at first, but as soon as the blind woman began to speak she guessed the object of her visit. She took her into the back shop and treated her fairly well. They had seen but little of each other in the days of their splendor, when they were fighting for the scepter of vice, and no the hour of decline had

arrived for both of them; and for Nana, decline was a sudden and tremendous fall. "I bring you my spoils," she said.

"Let us see them, my dear," replied La Saint Amand.

Nana successively took off five of the dresses she was wearing, and which were all of them nearly new. However, the one in blue plush, which she had worn on Andrée's wedding-day, had been burned by the vitriol about the bodice. La Saint Amand examined them minutely one after the other, and spread them out in the full light to judge of their color and effect. "I will give five hundred francs for them," she said, as she rejoined her ex-rival in the room behind the shop.

"Very well," replied Nana, who had retained her habit of not haggling over money matters.

She put the five hundred francs in her pocket, and La Saint Amand then conducted her back to her cab. As they parted, Nana's old rival whispered in her ear: "If you get well again, my dear, come and see me, and we will have a talk together. If not, I'll buy your pawn-tickets, your jewels, paintings, works of art, everything you like in fact. Only make haste about it, before an execution is put in, and don't let yourself be taken unawares. Always have your diamonds about you."

On leaving the second-hand clothes' shop Nana had herself driven to a swell restaurant where she lunched for a napoleon, in a private room. She gave a couple of francs as a gratuity to the waiter, who helped her into the cab and said to the driver, as in the days of her splendor, "Home!"

When she found herself alone once more in her deserted house, she was overcome by gloomy fancies. The noise of Paris, the motion of the vehicle, the succulent repast of which she had just partaken, had for a moment dispelled the clouds gathering over her mind. But now, once more a prey to the sadness reigning in the empty house, she thought with terror of the future. In the evening her physical sufferings, which she had mastered for a few hours, thanks to the nervous energy of her nature, returned and overcame her will. She took refuge in her room and went to bed. Fever almost invariably disturbed her slumbers, and on that particular night the acute pain of her new wounds was added to the burning sensation which she felt upon her face. She rolled about the bed until daylight, utterly unable to sleep. Extreme fatigue at last brought her the repose of slumber, but at nine o'clock in the morning she was awakened by a ring at the house bell. "It is Virginie," she thought, "it is Virginie coming back." And feeling almost gay, now that she had partaken of a little repose, she hastily dressed and went to open the gate.

"Is it here that Madame Nana resides?" asked a voice which she did not recognize.

"I am Nana," she answered in a harsh tone. "What do you want?"

"We have come to inform you that a judgment has been issued against you, and is to be executed this very day, in virtue of which, I, Maitre Bonasse, *huissier*, residing in Paris, assisted by the Commissary of Police of this district, have come to seize your furniture and effects."

Behind the man of the law and the commissary, a couple of witnesses and a clerk were standing. They had placed themselves near the gate in such a way as to prevent Nana from closing it, and the *huissier* had even set one of his huge feet between the portal and the wall. Nana choked down her rising anger and curtly exclaimed: "Come in."

Then she drew back, leaving the passage free. The men of the law entered the house. It was the last blow. All the remnants of her past sovereignty, all the vestiges of her vanished splendor, were examined, appraised, and catalogued.

The *huissier*, Maitre Bonasse, was a character. He was short and stout, with a clean-shaven face, carroty hair, and a bald patch on the summit of his head. His broad-brimmed hat was very rusty; his black trousers were shiny at the knees; his long frock coat had an extremely seedy look; and his dirty shirt — with frayed wristbands, which he tried to hide under his coat-sleeves — instead of being buttoned in front, gaped open, revealing his hairy chest. Around his neck he wore a very broad white cravat, which was tied in front in an imperceptible bow, and his feet were encased in low but well-blacked Blucher shoes. He looked like a priest with the tonsure-like patch on his head, his fat, shaven, sanctimonious face, his flabby hands, which he rubbed together complacently, his pharisaical gestures and beatified smile. He at once rummaged everywhere with his dirty fingers, opening cupboards and wardrobes and unfolding Nana's chemises, of which he felt the fine texture, smacking his lips and laughing sensually.

At the very outset Nana hastened into her room to place her pawn tickets in safety in her pocket. And when M. Bonasse followed her so as to prevent any misappropriation of property, she hastily slammed the door in his face, exclaiming: "Do what you like in the rest of the house; take everything if you choose; but I forbid your entering my room, as I mean to dress."

However, instead of dressing, she went to bed. This last emotion had made her sufferings all the more acute. Her finger had swollen since the previous day, and was quite destitute of strength or action. Moreover, moral torture was now added to physical suffering, as if to make her life one intolerable agony. She felt crushed in every limb, and the slightest movement was painful to her. Frightful vertigo seized her in her

weakness, and she was quite unable to decide on any course of action. Still she could hear M. Bonasse, who, with resigned compunction, was dictating the inventory of the marquis' apartment to his clerk in a sing-song tone. D'Albigny had occupied the next room to Nana's, and so the *huissier* was perfectly audible as he said: "*Primo*, two arm-chairs in green velvet and stained pearwood; *secundo*, four chairs also in green velvet and stained pearwood; *tertio*, an ebony writing-table incrusted with lacquer; *quarto*, two pairs of foils."

The harlot was beginning to feel hungry again. She had not had anything to eat since her lunch at the restaurant, and appetite was cruelly torturing her empty stomach. In her distress she mechanically rang the bell, and the man of the law profited of the occasion to invade her room.

"You must excuse my importunity, madame," he said, in a whining voice; "but my duties compel me to ask you to allow us to glance round this apartment." As he spoke he stood in the threshold looking at Nana's bulky form, the outline of which could be distinguished among the folds of the satin counterpane. She did not answer him, however, and taking her silence for consent, he at once entered the room.

"It would be very kind of you, sir," she said at last, "if you would let one of your men go and fetch me something to eat and drink. I am dying of thirst and hunger."

"That matter is quite beyond the scope of our functions and office, madame," said the *huissier*, who emphasized the words, "our functions," with the gravity of a prelate pronouncing the *Benedicat vos* over the lowered brows of a pious throng. And then he added: "How sincerely I regret having to trouble you!"

The inventory was continued; M. Bonasse dictating and the clerk still taking notes. Now and then the *huissier* indulged in some ingenious or suggestive remark respecting the use of certain objects of which he dictated the names, while the clerk, a tall young fellow with a girlish face, blushed and glanced timidly at the bed where Nana was rolling about, making the spring mattress groan beneath her. Since the previous day she had concealed the grotesque and hideous horror of her face under a black mantilla, which covered her lineaments like a thick mask. And the clerk, with his youthful imagination, pictured this woman, huddled together in sudden cowardice, as invested with superhuman beauty. At one moment she murmured in a despairing tone: "Ah! how hungry and thirsty I feel. I would sell myself for a crust of bread!"

Her voice broke as she uttered these words. The courage which had momentarily sustained her on the previous day, had fled again. The last vestiges of pride and shame had been destroyed by the physical sufferings of the night, by the moral

torture she experienced at this sudden invasion of ruin, personified by the unctuous *huissier*, who, after entering her room, was now blockading her very bed. She felt herself sliding down to miserable shame, to low abandonment, to brutal and foul provocations. All the old haughtiness of the harlot was crushed by the sledge-hammer blow which now precipitated her fall.

When the procès-verbal of the seizure was duly drawn up and signed, the *huissier* withdrew, followed by the commissary, the clerk and the witnesses; and Nana found herself alone again in the silent immensity of the house. Hunger and thirst tortured her entrails and burned her tongue. She was just thinking of getting up to ask the first passer-by to take her to some eating-house, when she heard a timid footstep near her door. Some one knocked, and then came in. It was the *huissier's* clerk returning with a bottle of common wine and a four-pound loaf of bread under his arm. "Here, madame," he said, placing the loaf on the counterpane and the bottle on the carpet near the head of the bed.

"Who are you?" she asked.

"I am Maitre Bonasse's clerk."

"Ah! yes, the *huissier*. He has a funny name for his profession. What do you want?"

"I have bought you some bread and wine, as you told me that you were hungry and thirsty, and that——"

"Ah! yes! where is it? Give it me!"

She stretched herself on her stomach so as to eat and raise her veil without the young fellow seeing her face. But she was unable to break the bread, owing to her finger, which almost made her cry out aloud with pain. Thereupon the clerk assisted her, and as he touched the velvety skin of her tiny hand, in which the gold of a generation had melted as in a magic crucible, he began to tremble strangely. However, Nana continued eating, and when her hunger was appeased she lowered her veil over her face and said: "Thanks, my lad, I shall never forget——"

"You promised——" stammered her beardless lover.

But Nana burst out into sardonic laughter. "Ah! yes," she said; it's true I owe you something. There, take that and be off." And feeling in the pocket of her dress, which lay over an arm-chair within her reach, she flung a napoleon to the love-sick clerk.

CHAPTER XLIII.

One day early in July, D'Albigny was removed from his cell and brought to the Assize Court to be tried. He had been previously questioned by the investigating magistrate, and had

formally denied all knowledge of the rape of which he stood accused. Margot, the flower-girl, was to be tried at the same sitting of the court, for having blinded Nana; and the two cases, thus grafted one onto the other, had attracted a compact throng of ladies and harlots to the Palais de Justice. It was known that Nana would give evidence in both trials, and the women were curious to see this living ruin once more. Folks also wished to hear that strange fellow Luc, who was one of the leading witnesses against the marquis, and whose connection with the affair, in his double capacity as a servant and a detective, seemed altogether fantastical.

During forty-eight hours Andrée and Lucien were obliged to absent themselves from the villa which they had rented at Dinardles-Bains, so as to come to Paris and give evidence in this trial, destined to remain one of the most celebrated cases of a period remarkable for its judicial dramas. Madame Despretz had also been subpœnàd, and it seemed likely that her evidence would not prove the least interesting for those who were fond of emotion. A certain number of fashionable harlots occupied reserved seats round the hall, and several young swells, in light coats and gaudy neck-ties, sat in the well of the court munching their crutch sticks. For them the interest of the proceedings centred in D'Albigny, whom they had often met here and there — shaking hands with him many a time at his club, at the fencing-hall he attended, at the Bourse, in the Bois de Boulogne, and during the *entr'actes* of first performances. They were curious to see how Nana's ex-lover would conduct himself in the presence of justice; and they felt especially interested in the fate of this man, who, far better than any woman, had taught them how to ruin themselves.

The counsel for the defense was seated below the dock, examining his brief; and below the bench the public prosecutor was installed. When the prisoner was placed in the dock the whole throng of sightseers rose up, the women even climbing onto the benches, so as to get a better view. "Silence!" cried the ushers, and tranquility was gradually restored.

The charge-sheet, which the clerk of the court at once began to read, may be briefly summarized as follows: "In the month of December, 185—, the prisoner D'Albigny became acquainted with Mademoiselle Adèle Despretz, who was then employed at a glove shop in the Passage de l'Opéra, Boulevard des Italiens. For nearly a month the prisoner, who had given the young girl a false name, solicited her to become his mistress, but in presence of her constant refusals he finally decided to effect his purpose forcibly. Under the pretext of seeing her home, he persuaded her, one evening at eleven o'clock, to enter a cab, the driver of which he had bribed beforehand. He then renewed his solicitations, and made the complainant an offer of marriage if she

would accede to his entreaties. But she persisted in refusing, whereupon he resorted to violence, pressing his handkerchief to her mouth in order to stifle her cries. From that night until the day of D'Albigny's arrest, Mademoiselle Despretz lost sight of him, and never heard him spoken of by the name which he had assumed while he was paying her his addresses."

As soon as the charge-sheet had been read the presiding judge looked at D'Albigny and exclaimed: "Prisoner, stand up."

The marquis obeyed. A number of opera-glasses were immediately levelled at him, and indeed from every corner of the hall attention was turned upon his tall and still graceful figure. He had greatly aged during the few weeks of detention he had experienced. His hair and his mustaches had become quite white, and there were several fresh wrinkles round about his eyes. As he rose up he turned his head toward the public seats and glanced over them. But his attention was speedily recalled to the bench by the judge asking him: "Your Christian name and your surname?"

He gave them in a low voice.

"Where were you born?"

"In Paris."

"Your age?"

"I was born in July, 1833, so that I am now forty-seven."

"Do you admit having known a Mademoiselle Adèle Despretz?"

"Yes."

"Under what circumstances did you know her?"

"I was young and rich. Mademoiselle Adèle Despretz was employed at a glove shop in the Passage de l'Opéra. She accepted my offers and my prèsents, and I never had any need to resort to any violence to obtain her favors. As for the person of the same name who profits by the coincidence to try and make me support the consequences of a misfortune with which I had no connection, I formally impeach her evidence."

"But on the day of her son's marriage, Mademoiselle Adèle Despretz publicly made a confession such as no virtuously-minded woman would have made, had she not been forced to it by the necessity of assuring her son's happiness."

"She, no doubt, made this statement to insure his happiness, as you say, but nothing proves that she spoke the truth."

"How do you explain that she recognized you after a lapse of twenty-five years?"

"She lied!"

"That is easy to say. Did she not allude to a scar on your neck, a scar left by a wound which she had inflicted while defending herself against your violence? How could she have guessed the existence of this scar, which was hidden by your collar, if she had not known and recognized you?"

"She was informed of this particular by one of her old lovers, who was also my valet. It was this man who arrested me. As you can realize, Monsieur le Président, the people who placed a bottle of vitriol in their work-girl's hand are not the sort of folks to shrink from perjury. All means are good to them, to rid themselves of the mother who claimed her daughter and of that mother's last friend!"

Nana rose up lugubriously in the black veil which shrouded her face, and stretching out her arm in the direction whence D'Albigny's voice proceeded, she cried: "I'm not your friend!"

"Have not these people turned the young girl into an instrument of fortune?" resumed the marquis.

"Enough, prisoner. You are not here to accuse other people, or even to defend yourself, at present. You are here to speak the truth, and not to pervert it. Sit down; if I have any other questions to ask of you, it will be for you to answer them."

The prisoner sat down. The principal witnesses were Madame Despretz, Nana, Luc, Andrée, Lucien Despretz and Pierre Naviel. Madame Despretz was heard the first. Her evidence was short, but crushing for D'Albigny: "I have nothing to add to what I said on the day of my son's wedding. The court will understand how painful these declarations are to me. I only repeat that I knew the man who is seated there"—and she pointed to D'Albigny—"when I was employed at a glove shop in the Passage de l'Opéra. I have found some of the letters he sent me at the shop, and here are two of them. They are not signed, but if the handwriting is compared with that of Monsieur D'Albigny, proof of their true origin will no doubt be obtained.

The presiding judge handed the letters which Madame Despretz had brought with her, to an expert who was in court. It happened that several documents in D'Albigny's handwriting had been taken from him when he was arrested, and after a minute comparison, the expert declared that the handwriting of the documents and that of the two letters addressed to Adèle Despretz was identical.

Rising up with unconcealed emotion, the marquis cried: "I swear that those letters are the work of a forger!" and so saying, he stretched out his hand toward the tall ivory figure of the Saviour, which, nailed upon a broad cross, soared with open arms above the bench.

"You are still playing the part of an accuser," said the presiding judge, sternly. "But I did not question you, and you had nothing to answer. Witness Nana, approach, and give your evidence."

"I don't know if this man is capable of ravishing a virtuous girl," said the ex-courtesan, "but I know that he is capable of robbing a woman like me, for he has plundered me most abominably. I am now certain that he forged my name to

several promissory notes, which I will submit to the court. So if there be a forger here, it must be the man you are now judging! Here are other notes signed by me, and I beg the experts to compare the signatures. Besides, the notes really signed by me are in my handwriting from first to last. I have shown them, together with the forgeries, to several persons who are skillful in judging handwriting and whose statements have left me no room for doubt. Yes, I have been robbed, and I have had to pay the notes which that scoundrel forged."

D'Albigny became very pale, and rising up, despite the guards beside him, "You lie! you lie!" he cried. "Do you hear me, you unnatural mother? I beg the court to take that woman's declaration for what it is worth. She is revenging herself because she knew that I wished to leave her after being ruined by her!"

"Compel the prisoner to sit down," said the presiding judge to the two guards; and he added: "Witness Luc step forward."

While Nana was being conducted to a seat, Luc approached the bar where witnesses stand in giving evidence. He wore a long black frock coat and gloves. He gave his evidence very slowly, so that the marquis might hear every accusing syllable. "I was a valet in the service of Madame Nana, here present, and it was specially my duty to attend on the prisoner, who, by the way, lived at his mistress' expense. I was acquainted with various attempts which the prisoner made to seduce my daughter, Mademoiselle Andrée Naviel, now Madame Lucien Despretz. The first attempt took place when Mademoiselle Naviel brought some flowers to the house the day before a fête which was given by Madame Nana. The second attempt took place on the same day that the house was destroyed by fire. Mademoiselle Andrée was then forcibly detained in the house by the marquis, who locked her up in the boudoir, and almost caused her death. Fortunately she was saved by one of Madame Nana's lovers—a very brave and worthy man——"

"Confine yourself to the simple facts, witness," said the judge. "The court's time is precious. Did you or did you not hear the prisoner state that he had committed a rape on the person of Mademoiselle Adèle Despretz?"

"I heard him as I hear you, Monsieur le Président. Madame Despretz called one day on Madame Nana to beg of her not to stir up any trouble between M. Lucien Despretz and my daughter. Madame Nana refused to make any promise, and ordered me to call the marquis. Thereupon Madame Despretz, not wishing to meet the man, who, on a previous occasion, had almost killed her son, went away. Otherwise she would have found herself face to face with the marquis, and would have recognized him at once. That would have prevented the

scandalous scene which took place on the wedding day. But to return to what I was saying, I went to fetch the marquis in his rooms. Madame Nana was dressing to go and visit the house which he had just rented for her in the Avenue de Friedland, and, while she finished her toilet, Monsieur D'Albigny related how he had committed a rape on Mademoiselle Adèle Despretz several years previously. The particulars are consigned in my report."

"Very good; you may retire. Witness Nana, do you acknowledge that the evidence of the last witness is exact?"

"Quite exact, Monsieur le Président."

"Madame Andrée Despretz!" called the judge.

Andrée rose up, looking very charming, for happiness had made her radiant. She wore a mauve silk dress trimmed with black lace, black gloves extending to her elbows, black satin boots, and a black straw "*Merveilleuse*" hat adorned with a feather of the same shade, while a lace fan hung down over her skirt, cut tight at the hips and rather short in front. A murmur of admiration sped through the throng as she rose up before the court in all the splendor of her youthful beauty.

"The jury require some information on a delicate matter, madame," said the presiding judge. "To assure the definite triumph of justice and truth it is necessary that you should tell us, in all sincerity, if the prisoner wished to offer you violence, as he seems to have done with Mademoiselle Adèle Despretz."

"I cannot say if he *wished* to act in that manner, Monsieur le Président, as he did not do so."

"However, he sequestrated you, and treated you with moral violence?"

"He detained me in spite of myself, and threatened me with violence to compel me to do as he wished; but I can only accuse him of threats."

"Yes, he did not put them into execution, but the manner in which he sequestrated you fully establishes his premeditation in what concerns you. You may retire, madame."

The other evidence had no importance as regards the charge of rape, but it furnished abundant proof of the prisoner's brutality and profligacy, and of the infamy of his position in Nana's house. The truth was already dawning upon the minds of the jury, while black night descended into D'Albigny's soul. He now felt all the weight of his shame, and realized the depth of his fall. Nothing could save him now. The evidence was too precise and crushing. He had long thought that he could afford to defy Justice, but she had called him to account at last.

Suddenly a black gown rose up in front of him. The Public Prosecutor was on his feet, about to address the jury. He examined in turn all the proofs of guilt which were furnished by the evidence of the witnesses, the victim's statements, and the

prisoner's own antecedents; and he wound up his long address as follows: "From all these accumulated proofs, gentlemen of the jury, I conclude that D'Albigny is guilty, and I ask that the highest penalty fixed by the law may be inflicted upon him. For remark this, gentlemen of the jury, either the prisoner is guilty or he is innocent. If he be innocent, acquit him, but if he be guilty, no extenuating circumstance can be admitted in favor of such a scoundrel! The teachers of vice and the robbers of feminine honor must learn that society is armed against them, and that justice is implacable in dealing with such offenses as theirs.

As soon as this speech was finished D'Albigny rose to his feet. He had reflected while the Public Prosecutor was speaking — reflected as to the decision of the jury in presence of all these accumulated charges and proofs, in presence of the public disdain now reared upon the ruins of the diabolical "luck" which had shielded him for twenty years. The jurymen would certainly not doubt his guilt; it was fully established by the declarations of Adèle Despretz, Luc and Nana, who had betrayed her ex-lover's cause. The letters which Adèle Despretz had produced had fallen like a last infallible proof upon the prisoner's head. What course could he adopt? Would it not be best to try and touch his judges by a public confession, an eloquent, repentant speech, which would no doubt win him the admission of extenuating circumstances, and consequently a more lenient sentence? He thought so, and accordingly he asked the presiding judge's permission to plead his own cause, before his advocate addressed the court.

"Speak!" replied the judge.

Thereupon D'Albigny, placing his hand on his heart and raising his eyes to heaven, began as follows, in a voice which quivered with assumed emotion: "I owe the truth to every one, and I will pay that debt of honor. The charge brought against me is correct. I am guilty, so condemn me. But I ask that extenuating circumstances may, at least, be admitted in my favor. Five-and-twenty years have elapsed since the event which has to-day brought me to this dock. I am now in my forty-seventh year, and I was then barely two-and-twenty. My early youth had been very austere; but suddenly, scarcely of age and without experience, I became the master of a fortune, and found myself in Paris in the midst of temptation, among a corrupt and frivolous society. I met Adèle Despretz and fell madly in love with her. I told her of my love, but she in no wise returned it; I offered her to marry her, she derided me, and yet, while she refused my offers and laughed at my hopes, she played the coquette with me, and fanned the fire of a nature which was full of blood, ardor, and love for herself — a nature which had not then spent its energy in debauchery and orgies.

She accepted my arm to escort her every evening to the railway station, she even accepted the offer of the cab in which I was guilty of the act for which you are no doubt about to condemn me. It was there that I renewed to her the loyal avowal of my love and my offer to marry her, but she again resorted to the raillery which had so far proved successful. To the first slight audacity, to the first petty familiarity to which my own desire and her taunts impelled me, she replied by inflicting the wound which she has spoken of, and of which this is the scar. Who of you, gentlemen, carried away by love and desire, by the kind of rage with which I was filled by this woman's coquetry and the sight of my own blood — who of you could have remained calm? Seized with sudden madness, I perhaps abused the physical strength with which nature had endowed me, but I did not realize it; there are moments in life when one is irresponsible. Adèle Despretz fell a victim to the madness she herself had prompted. In such a matter who can say what is the limit of a woman's will, and at what exact point rape begins? Gentlemen, judge and sentence me, it will be a salutary example, but remember that many of you have been as guilty as myself, if not in fact, at least in intention; for I was young, an orphan, without parental advice, without the guidance of a mother, whose example would have taught me to respect women — I had lost her, my good and saintly mother. Poor dear woman! Would you have ever thought that one day your son ——"

D'Albigny stopped short, his voice broke, and bursting into sobs he fell heavily onto his bench, as if crushed by the weight of his repentance. A lively emotion spread throughout the court, and a couple of gay women began to cry. Three or four young fellows in the swell circle, alone remarked: "It is shameful. This man doesn't know how to conduct himself. Who would have believed in such cowardice on D'Albigny's part." And one of the party, imitating the voice of a street loafer, exclaimed, "Dash it all! Why, he has turned on the water-spout!"

However, there was an energetic "Hush!" and the counsel for the defense rose to his feet. His speech was very weak, for in the belief that D'Albigny would persist in denying the charge, he had based the whole system of defense upon his client's innocence. Now, however, every argument that he had prepared was annihilated by the marquis' public confession, and all that he, the advocate, could do, was to plead for the benefit of extenuating circumstances. The presiding judge summed up, with perfect impartiality, and retired into his private room with his assessors, while the jury withdrew to deliberate.

There was a loud buzz throughout the court. The young swells discussed the case with phlegmatic nonchalance, or made bets together concerning the severity of the sentence which

was about to be pronounced upon the prisoner. Opera glasses were levelled insolently at the public prosecutor, and laughing remarks were exchanged respecting the comical appearance of some of the advocates who, duly arrayed in their black gowns, had come to hear the case and criticize their learned brother's speech. The harlots, scattered through the throng, gave most of their attention to Andrée, analyzing her toilet through their eye-glasses, mounted in tortoise-shell with incrustations of gold. All eyes finally converged upon the young wife, as upon some luminous point. The men admired her and envied Lucien Despretz, who sat beside her in a somewhat stiff attitude, with his slight figure arrayed in a black frock coat. He and Andrée talked together in whispers, and now and then Lucien gazed upon her in the grayish light which softened the outline of her profile, blending the rosy tint of her cheeks with the marble-like pallor of her forehead. Her curly hair cast a slight shadow over her dark eyebrows, beneath which her limpid, green eyes were beaming. They seemed larger since her happiness, and the golden *striæ* of their ardent pupils had acquired a living flash. The jury returned, the judge resumed his seat, and the verdict was given. Then D'Albigny, found guilty of having committed a rape upon the person of Adèle Despretz with premeditation, and, in whose favor no extenuating circumstances were recorded, was sentenced to undergo a term of five years' hard labor.

A loud clamor arose as the judge ceased speaking, and one of the young swells called out: "You must kill yourself, marquis, you must kill yourself!"

D'Albigny gave the fellow who thus spoke to him a hateful glance, and rejoined in a loud voice: "You ought to go to the galleys before me — do you hear? — and remain there after I have left."

The two guards closed beside the marquis to lead him away. But ere he passed through the doorway behind the dock he turned for one moment to glance at the society he was leaving; and stretching out one of his soft, white, idle hands toward the harlots who were watching him through their eye-glasses, he murmured with a bitter smile: "Good-by, my duckies, good-by."

The case of Margot, the flower-girl, now came on for trial. She simply confessed the facts, and did not even try to deny the premeditation with which she was charged. Andrée related what had occurred on her wedding day, and spoke very highly of her work-girl, who had been impelled by devotion to her mistress to commit the criminal act which had caused Nana's final ruin.

Luc's evidence was altogether in the prisoner's favor. "This girl," he said, "began life badly. She was employed by an

artificial flower manufacturer named Paillardin, who had seduced nearly all his work-girls, and she became his favorite. After he died under tragical circumstances, Margot found herself out of work, and fell into the clutches of Paillardin's valet, a scoundrel who still lives on prostitution — a lodging-house D'Albigny, so to say. One day, however, thanks to Providence, the wretched girl met Mademoiselle Andrée Naviel, who rescued her from her bully and from the filthy life she was leading. Since then Margot has worked hard and become a well-conducted girl. You see, gentlemen of the jury, there is nothing like honest toil to keep one in the straight path. Well, this girl is as attached as a faithful dog to her mistress, for she is grateful for having been saved; and so when she saw that there was a plot on foot to harm her benefactress she only listened to her heart, which called out to her: 'Defend your mistress, defend the woman who saved you, defend her with your teeth, your nails, no matter how!' Well, she defended her with vitriol, and I am convinced that she didn't think she was doing wrong."

After Luc, a physician attached to the public prosecution service was heard. He simply said: "I have examined the prisoner, and find that she presents all the symptoms of hysteria, so I conclude that her share of responsibility was limited when she committed the act of which she now stands charged."

Nana, whose head was still shrouded in a black vail, gave evidence the last: "I don't know this girl," she said, "she had no motive of personal vengeance against me. Her employers alone can have induced her to do what she did."

The jury retired, and after a lengthy deliberation Margot was acquitted. The presiding judge at once gave orders for her to be set at liberty. Scarcely was she free than she hastened to Andrée, threw herself at her feet and kissed the hem of her dress. Luc approached her with Madame Despretz. "Well," said he, "you are out of Saint Lazare once more; try to avoid going there again. Follow Madame Naviel's advice, it was she who brought up my daughter, and to tell the truth, she brought her up far better than I could have done myself."

Margot looked at him with her round eyes, which were beaming brightly, and stammered with comical embarrassment: "I'm no longer afraid of you now, Monsieur Luc, and if you will allow it I will even love you, yes, love you."

While this conversation was going on, the crowd of sightseers left the court-room. Nana went off, erect and lugubrious under her black vail, and guided by a policeman whom she had asked to conduct her to her cab. The judge and the jury had withdrawn, and, alone, above the bench, the bare figure of Christ stretched out its ivory arms in the waning daylight.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THAT same evening Andrée and her husband took the train back to Brittany. Madame Despretz left the Rue Crozatier for some comfortable rooms in one of the houses which the young couple had purchased in Paris, and which were entrusted to the care of M. Naviel. Luc was employed as a commission agent in the flower business, and Margot resumed her work. The newly-married pair were thus left to themselves. At eight o'clock on the following morning they reached St. Malo, and the railway omnibus conveyed them to the port where they embarked for Dinard. A little steamer transported them to the point of the promontory of St. Enogat, just below the villa they had rented.

This villa was built on the blue-granite rock stretched at the mouth of the Rance. A terrace, planted with ash trees, extended in front of the house, where the walls were covered with Virginian creeper, the young shoots of which clambered up here and there from amid the mass of delicate foliage. From their room on the first floor the lovers could view these flexible branches, twining around the window, and swaying in the breeze from the sea. They often woke up at daybreak, and watched the sunrise tinging their white bed-curtains with a purple glow. The sky slowly cleared above the pine woods of La Brillantais; Aurora opened her fan of light; large clouds, as buoyant as feathers and as rosy as flamingoes' wings, hovered above the trees; and the pale yellow band across the sky expanded, until it became merged in the soft azure overhead. Below the woods stretched the mouth of the Rance, down which came heavy barges laden with timber from Plouër. At times Lucien and Andrée were awakened by the matutinal ditty of some fishermen, raising the anchor and hoisting the sails of their boat. And they awoke in full happiness with laughter and kisses, while the pigeons cooed lovingly under the roof. They had engaged a peasant woman of the coast to serve them, and felt no need of a tribe of lackeys. Their loneliness in this lost corner of Brittany, where the echo of Paris does not penetrate, delighted them. They saw nobody; but what did that matter since they saw each other? Their souls seemed blended together, and they no longer needed to speak to understand one another. There were charming spells of silence between them, ineffable truces to talking which expressed everything more eloquently than wôrds. And as the days elapsed, the more did they enjoy the delight of living together, and the more infinite did this delight become to them. When they heard the first whistle of the steamboat arriving from St. Malo, they rang for the servant, who came in carrying two bowls of com-

mon crockery, full of hot coffee, covered with thick cream, and flanked by two slices of buttered toast. And sometimes Lucien said to the woman: "Only bring me one bowl of coffee, if you like, but bring three slices of toast."

"Well, sir, I fancied that the Parisians didn't eat anything," replied the servant one morning; "but now I begin to think that they eat as much as we do."

After taking their coffee they rose. Lucien sprang out of bed the first, fetched Andrée's silk stockings and gave them to her; brought her slippers and poised them on the tips of her little feet stretched out toward him. Then he wrapped her in her dressing-gown of blue cashmere, embroidered with flowers and lined with pink china silk; and while he dressed her like a doll, he covered her so often with mad kisses and caresses, that nine o'clock struck before they were ready to go out. Every morning they went for a sail before breakfast. They had engaged a solid boat and two men by the month. The master, named Camisard, was an ex-pilot who now took tourists about during the summer, and rested during the winter.

Andrée put on a coarse straw hat with a broad brim, and Lucien, clad in a linen suit, gave her his arm. They reached the water from their terrace by some steps cut in the rock. When the water was high, the boat awaited them just below, but when the tide was out they had to walk some distance over the sands. Once on board they sat down astern near the master, while the sails were hoisted and the boat pushed off. As they got under way the master settled the sails and attended to the helm. Soon the coast seemed to recede from them, and on the terrace, behind the Italian balustrade of white stone, they could see their Breton servant placidly watching them, with her large white cap standing out in bold relief against the Virginian creeper.

A couple of days had elapsed after their return from the trial in Paris, when Camisard proposed to take them to Cézambre on the morrow. "What is to be seen there?" asked Andrée.

"Nothing, madame, it is a rock; but talking of rocks, you will see plenty of strange ones there. There's the Devil's Tooth, for instance — a kind of peak which is only accessible to sailors and seagulls. However, there is a foreign prince buried on the summit — a strange idea he had there. He had hired a room in the custom-house station, and it was there that he died."

"What was his name?" asked Andrée, eagerly.

"To tell the truth, I don't know. I was only told that he had come from India, and that he had died of sorrow."

"Ah! well, have the boat ready at nine o'clock to-morrow morning, and we will go and see Cézambre."

That evening Lucien and Andrée entered the Dinard casino for the first time. A ball was taking place there. They danced

together alone, lost in the crowd of strangers, and enjoying the egotistical pleasure of belonging to each other, without having to make any concession of politeness to folks whom they did not know. Andrée looked charming in her plain dress of light-blue silk. The only articles of jewelry that she wore were the diamond roses which Lucien had given her in her ears; a massive gold bracelet, studded with torquoises, around her right wrist; and a diamond aigrette, which scintillated as it fluttered above her brow, amid her frizzy hair. They greatly amused themselves in dancing alone together, carried away amid the intoxicating whirl of a waltz, the graceful undulation of a mazurka, or the spirited steps of a polka. Several young fellows who felt jealous of Lucien's happiness, hovered around Andrée, and barely concealed their indiscreet admiration. Some even ventured to ask her to dance with them, but she refused with a smile; and when they insisted, taking her for an unmarried girl, she maliciously rejoined, "I have promised all the dances to this gentleman," meaning Lucien.

One young fellow, who was more audacious than the others, laughed rather spitefully on hearing this, and with a sudden disregard for the proprieties, exclaimed: "Take care, mademoiselle, that gentleman's good fortune will lay you open to remark."

"That gentleman has a right to lay me open to remark," replied Andrée, quickly.

"Then he is——"

"My husband."

The young fellow bowed and carried his importunities elsewhere. Andrée let herself glide along with Lucien amid the whirl of bare shoulders, light bodices, long trains, and black coats, around the dancing-hall. She waltzed admirably and almost by intuition. She surrendered herself to the vertigo which had taken possession of her heart, leaning on the arm which sustained her with its firm pressure; and the murmured avowals she overheard, the puffs of saline air which entered through the open windows, the perfume emanating from hair and skin, the feminine scent which arose in the evening warmth, increased her emotion, her trouble and vertigo, and intoxicated her.

When they had seen enough of this indifferent throng they went home afoot, along the boulevard lined with plane trees, and overlooking the shore. They walked slowly, listening to the murmur of the rising tide, to the harmonious ripple of the wavelets spending their force on the soft sand, and to the rustle of the leaves shaken by the breeze. The sigh of the tide, the regular rolling of the water toward the sand, seemed like the breathing of some monster asleep under the starry expanse of sky. They stopped for a moment and listened dreamily.

"It sounds like a kiss," whispered Andrée.

"Yes, that is it; listen, darling," replied Lucien, kissing her on the eyelids.

She returned him the kiss on his lips, and for a couple of minutes they amused themselves by alternating their kisses with those which the water printed on the shore — the simple pleasure of children in love, as pure as the ethereal expanse in which the silver moon was rising.

"Then you love me as much as on the first day?" asked Lucien.

"A great deal better."

"Truly?"

"Yes, truly; I am no longer frightened."

"Yes, I understand. And I, Andrée, I ask myself at times if I am dreaming or if I am awake. Shall we really live like this for always? Is it possible?"

"If it pleases you, Lucien, it is possible; if your Andrée's love does not seem monotonous ——"

"Enough. That is blasphemy!"

"No, let me speak. If you wish us to be happy you must love me always. Did you notice how proud I was to decline the invitations of the young fellows who asked me to dance with them this evening? I laughed at their vexation, and I clung to your arm very tightly so as to prevent you from escaping me and inviting some other women. There were some very pretty girls at the Casino — English, Parisians and Bretons. I was almost afraid of being thought ugly beside them."

"No, no; you are not saying what you think, or you don't see yourself as I see you. Where were they, the lovely women you talk about? I never noticed them. I only saw your eyes, the sparkle of which almost turned my head while we were waltzing. I dived into their depths, I could read thoughts of love there; and I saw myself in them, and almost fancied I was handsome."

While talking like this they reached the villa, and went up into their room. A letter was lying on the mantlepiece. It bore the Paris postmark, and came from Luc. Lucien read it aloud to Andrée:

"My Dear Friends — I write to tell you that we are almost all of us getting on pretty well, and that we are freshly installed in our new quarters. The flower trade is brisk, and it seems that I am a good commission agent. Madame Naviel is pleased, and Monsieur Naviel is very busy looking after your property. What an excellent worthy man he is, and what a fist he has! He could throw all the tenants out of the window if they failed to pay their rent; but at the same time he is so kind-hearted that he would prefer to throw himself out, or else to pay the rent for them. There is also Madame Despretz, who is ailing.

All the emotion of the wedding day has crushed her; she is as old as the streets now, and barely drags herself along. However, we shall be married in a month's time. It will be a nurse's situation for me; but I love her so much, poor, dear Adèle — I am so grateful to her for having forgiven me that it will be happiness to watch over her, and attend to her as if she were my daughter. Alas! why are we not both of us younger? We are like two old coins which have lost currency. However, it can't be helped. You will come to the wedding all the same. I rely upon you. It is to inform you of it, and at the same time to invite you, that I scrawl these few lines? And now, little ones, I kiss you both, and beg you to do the same for your old monkey. Luc."

Lucien laid the letter open on the mantelshelf. Andrée, tired by the dancing, had stretched herself on the sofa and begun to doze while he was still reading. Her right arm was bent under her head, and her left one was hanging down to the floor, in all its sculptural beauty. Her bosom could be seen between her partially unfastened bodice, as Lucien softly drew near to her.

At the end of the pier Saint Malo the lighthouse was flashing. The town, huddled together within its ramparts slept heavily on its rocky island; while its sister, Saint Servan, gently stretched at the foot of the semaphore, reposed in the moonlight. Far away amid the breakers one could hear the grave murmur of the open sea, which, in its lunar clearness, limited the horizon with a luminous streak.

Then Andrée's husband bent down beside her, contemplating her pure profile — to which the softened light lent ineffable pallidity — her lips which smiled at some happy dream, her lowered eyelids, and her open nostrils; and without her knowing it he took off her dancing shoes and carried her, still sleeping, to her bed, strewing the lace petticoats and silken skirt on the way.

At nine o'clock on the following morning, Andrée and Lucien embarked with Camissard and his man. A fresh wind was blowing from the northwest; the sea was slightly rough, and the waves had an emerald transparency. Little white clouds were darting along with extreme rapidity in the limpid sky. As the boat started off in the direction of Saint Malo, the sun covered the bay with golden spangles, and the windows of the old seaport town blazed with a yellowish light, which made them look like large topazes incrusted in the blue granite of the walls. A brig and a schooner were coming out of the basin with their sails duly set.

At a few cable lengths from the pier, Camissard tacked, steered his course for Harbor Island and took in the sails. The waves became larger as the boat got farther out to sea, scudding along with prodigious speed and skimming through the green water, which plashed against the sides. At times a higher wave than

the others rushed forward with a growl—striking the bows with such force that the timber creaked—and passed under the keel, raising the boat to a height at which the horizon seemed to expand. And then, like visions of fantastic fish, big black rocks and reefs revealed their jagged summits, around which the foam of the breakers was seething. At a mile from Harbor Island, Camissard put the helm aport, and called out to his man: "Get ready to tack."

The seaman shifted his sails, the boat settled down, and with the wind to larboard scudded under press of canvas toward Cézambre. The young folks landed there at about eleven o'clock. They had brought sufficient provisions for four-and-twenty hours, together with a tent, which they set up beyond reach of the high tide. Having thrown the anchor, the two seamen came on shore in their turn, and sat down on the sand near the tent. Andrée and Lucien passed them a couple of bottles of claret and half a leg of mutton. The lunch was very gay. In a cavity formed by a rock a fire was lighted with some dry rushes, and Andrée warmed some coffee which she had brought with her. Now and then the wind raised a shower of sand which beat upon the canvas of the tent. After the coffee, Andrée asked Camisard, "Where is the Devil's Tooth?"

"At the other side of the island. It overlooks the sea; and I've heard say that at the foot of it there are still a hundred fathoms of water at low tide. If you want to visit the tomb, the coast-guards will point it out to you. You'll find their place up that path there, which leads from the shore through the island. Only, with this breeze on, you had better not venture onto the Devil's Tooth."

Andrée took Lucien's arm, and they began to climb the steep sea bank, where their feet were embedded in the sand at each step they took. The pathway leading to the coast-guards' station was fringed with some patches of poor soil planted with carrots, potatoes and cabbages, the stunted leaves of which were so preyed upon by snails that they looked like perfect cobwebs. Elsewhere the ground was covered with short, dry herbage interspersed with clumps of heather which the wild rabbits nibbled. The coast-guard station was some three hundred yards ahead in a hollow well sheltered from the nor'-westers. Andrée and Lucien could see a coast-guard sitting outside the door, reflectively smoking his pipe. He rose up as they approached him.

"What was the name of the foreign prince who died here a month ago?" asked Andrée, whose voice trembled with emotion.

"He would never tell us his name, madame; we only knew that he was a kind of prince in his country. Would you like to see the room where he died?"

"Madame Despretz looked at her husband as if to consult him. "Yes," answered Lucien, who saw that she wished to go in.

The coast-guard guided them up a dark staircase which led to a little landing, and opened a narrow door. The room was small, and lighted by two white-curtained windows looking toward the shore. The bedstead was of cherry wood, and two rush chairs served as seats. On a chest of drawers against the wall, a manuscript was lying open, and Madame Despretz took it up and read upon the cover these simple words: "To Andrée."

She recognized the handwriting of the man who had died for love of her. "Will you sell me this manuscript?" she asked.

"Willingly, madame. When we buried the young fellow, I thought of burying the writing with him, but my comrades preferred to keep it to show to strangers. If you care to buy it I will leave you judge of what it is worth."

Andrée handed a hundred francs to the coast-guard and opened the pages, which had remained there like a dead man's will. They were few in number.

"He kept on writing till his last day," resumed the coast-guard. "He was as gentle as a girl, and for our care and services he left us each a thousand francs. It was all that remained to him when he died."

"Where is he buried?"

"On the Devil's Tooth. It isn't easy to get up there, especially with such a wind on as there is to-day. You must follow the path which passes before our door across the island, and then, when you get to a cistern, turn to the right."

M. and Madame Despretz left the mortuary-room and followed the road as far as the cistern. They then descended a kind of glacis, on which the herbage was dry and slippery and which sloped down toward the northern shore of the island, conducting to a granite crag which rose some thirty feet above the lower part of the declivity. On the summit of this towering mass there was a platform of a hundred square feet, in the center of which one could discern a black and unhewn stone, raised erect on one end like a menhir. Below the peak on which arose the primitive monument raised to the foreigner by his grateful friends the coast-guards, the cliff hung over the sea. The high waves coming from the open broke two hundred feet lower down, rising up wall-like, capped with white foam, and then sinking into the gulf which seemed to yawn until another mass of water filled up its growling depths. To reach the summit of the Devil's Tooth, it was necessary to climb an almost vertical wall of rock, and Lucien was afraid that some accident might befall Andrée if she attempted this dizzy ascent. The tempests had slowly isolated this mass of granite, which only held to the soil

on one side, while on the other it overtopped the watery abyss like a huge porteullis fixed to the high cliff beaten by the sea.

"Andrée," said her husband, gravely, "you must not tempt death!"

"He who lies there sacrificed himself for both of us. We owe him the liberty we enjoy and the fortune we did not refuse. If I were pious, I should say to you, 'we owe him a prayer.' I think that we owe him at least a souvenir, so let us take it to him, Lucien."

The coast-guards had cut in the rock a double series of holes, large enough for one to set the tips of one's feet in them. Andrée was the first to engage in the adventurous ascent, saying to her husband, "Come, who loves me, follows me."

He climbed up after her, clinging to the rock with one hand supporting her with the other. Below them stretched the steep, slippery glacis, cut atwain, right and left, by the hollow where the sea-gulls hovered and the white foam whirled around. At certain moments the gusts of wind which swept over the island clung to the young wife's dress as if seeking to carry her off into the abyss. But brave, like a true child of the people, she quietly waited until the blast had passed by, clinging with both hands to the anfracturosities of the granite. At last she profited by a momentary lull to spring onto the platform, and Lucien followed her.

The funeral stone rose up before them. The coast-guards had roughly painted the date of the rajah's death upon it in red letters and figures. The two happy lovers sat down, side-by-side, in the grass growing around this block of unpolished porphyry, partially embedded in the cavity which had been dug with pickaxes to receive the rajah's remains.

The sea stretched away to the horizon before them. To the north it was unbounded; westward Cape Fréhel; and eastward the Pointe de la Vardo alone limited the bay. To the south, the low, gray coast of Brittany could scarcely be distinguished.

Before leaving the villa Andrée had plucked a black heart's-ease on the terrace. The flower was fading on her bosom, its petals rolling up. She took it in her hand, tore one of her long fair hairs from her head, and with this golden string she fastened the faded flower to the culminating point of the lofty grave-stone. Then drawing the rajah's manuscript from her pocket she began to read it aloud, while the sea-birds screeched around her:

CEZAMBRE, June 5th.

"It is still I! I am astonished to find myself living since Andrée is lost to my fraternal friendship. Does life care more for me than I care for it? I have come here to die, near a mighty scene, dreaming of you, Andrée! My last thought will be for you! It must be surrounded by the infinite! You will

never know what has become of me! Why should I sadden you? For you would think it your duty to feel sad — you will fancy that I have returned to my country — and perhaps it is true — for death is the country of those who suffer——"

Andrée was abruptly interrupted. A sudden gust, coming from the open sea, had snatched the rajah's manuscript from her hand. She saw it fly away, soaring at a tremendous height, the white leaves fluttering in the wind like the wings of a sea-gull carried along by the blast. At the same time, Lucien perceived a black line stretched across the horizon just above the sea, in the direction of Cape Fréhel. Two coast-guards were hastening down the glacis, and one of them, approaching the Devil's Tooth, called out: "Make haste and come down! There is a squall coming on. Come down at once if you don't want the wind to carry you off."

It was far more perilous to descend than to climb up, for one had to look below for the holes in which to set one's feet, and in doing so one could not help perceiving the granite wall on which the Devil's Tooth was reared. The wild seething of the beating foam attracted one's eyes and fascinated one with giddiness. Just as Lucien began to lower himself he found nothing by which he could cling to the upper part of the rock, his hands slipped across the grass, and he felt himself impelled downward by his own weight. But Andrée saw his peril, caught hold of his arm, and succeeded, with the nervous strength of will, in drawing him toward her.

At the same moment the hurricane predicted by the coast-guards burst forth. One of them hastened to the rescue, and managed, at the peril of his life, to reach the young couple. A long, solid rope was coiled around his waist, and they succeeded in knotting it securely to the grave-stone. The black line which had extended between Cape Fréhel and the Pointe de la Varde was now rising over the sky. The sea had changed its color, assuming a leaden tint, and the wind swept over the cliff of the island with a furious roar and whistle. The rushes and bushes, torn away by this sudden blast, flew about like the wings of a lark in the clutches of a hawk. The coast-guard fastened Andrée by the waist to the rope which he had brought with him, and let the end of it slip down to the glacis.

Then turning to Lucien Despretz, he said: "Hold on well till I'm below. When there's a lull you can come down yourselves. One must be a bit of a sailor to trust oneself to a rope, and it would be dangerous for your lady to try it as long as the squall lasts. Fortunately, it won't last long in this season, but in October or December you might have to stop up here for a couple of days."

So speaking, he let himself down to the glacis. Raised by the wind, the water was now gathering in dark masses, which

bounded across the bay. Andrée and Lucien were obliged to lie down on the grass behind the rajah's tomb, where, secured to the upright stone, they could gaze in comparative security upon the tempest breaking around them. The roll of the waves acquired furious intensity, and across the sky, which the clouds tinged with inky stains, the blast flew wildly onward. Toward the evening, however, the wind fell, the sky became blue once more, and the sea regained its beautiful emerald tint of the morning. Still, huge waves burst from time to time through the passes, and poured across the roads, breaking on the shore.

"Let us go down," said Andrée; and with the help of the rope fastened to the rajah's tomb, they descended to the glacis. As they climbed the pathway leading to the coast-guard station, Andrée paused, and casting a look upon the primitive mausoleum which stood out in its blackness against the sea, she murmured: "Good-by!"

Then taking her husband's arm, she drew him along the pathway toward the boat, which was waiting to take them back to their villa of endless love.

EPILOGUE.

NANA sold her remaining fine linen, together with her last dresses and pawn tickets, to La Saint Amand, for a few thousand francs, and installed herself at a lodging-house in Rue Lafayette. She had a bedroom and a dressing-room for eighty francs a month, and paid an additional hundred for a copious dinner, which was served her every evening. She usually got up at four o'clock in the afternoon and eat no breakfast. She did not trouble to invest her small capital, but kept it by her. She scarcely ever went out; indeed, what was the use of her doing so?

And yet life clung most obstinately to her harlot's robust frame. Her muscles became hardened for the strife, and her magnificent constitution battled against decrepitude, preventing it from setting hold upon her flesh and tampering with the firm, round contours of her form. The sores upon her face had by degrees become cicatrized. Frightful ugliness had taken the place of her once marvelous beauty, but her physical sufferings had diminished; still she often felt atrocious neuralgic pains, which prevented her from sleeping, in the empty orbits of her eyes. The finger which Virginie had twisted remained inert. She now wore her hair short and curly, and she covered her face with a black-velvet mask whenever she went out at the close of day to breathe a little fresh air in the Square Montholon.

The frequenters of the square had finished by knowing who she was, but she was habitually called "the masked woman." She had a strange appearance, as she passed by, phantom-like, with a mantilla falling over her eyes and half concealing her

mask, and her figure draped in a black faille dress, the lace skirt of which she still held up with haughty grace. She was usually accompanied by a servant from the lodging-house, who took her to a seat, and returned to fetch her when the square was shut up for the night. During the earlier days, her appearance frightened the children who were playing in the pathways, but they soon grew accustomed to seeing her. Their mothers and nurses had learned who she was: a kind of pity surrounded her, folks drew aside from her, stopped talking when she approached, and however deserved her misfortune may have been, they carefully refrained from laughing in the presence of this human ruin, whose gait still retained much of the majesty of yore. The shopkeepers' wives who met in the little square to talk about their private affairs and slander their husbands, paused in their cackle to whisper one to another: "Do you see that woman in black? That's Nana."

Nana! The name roused a world of lascivious fancies and senseless luxury in their minds. Nana, 'twas a royalty overturned, a queen hurled from her throne by the revolution of virtue. Nana ruined, it meant the end of the orgy, the supreme rout of the "mashers," the bankruptcy of gilded vice. And these women, who were charitable in their hearts, thought with saddened commiseration of the terrible fate of this flattered empress of beauty who in less than a year had become a poor, hideous, blind invalid, reduced to begging a lodging-house servant to give her his arm so that she might breathe a little dusty air in the noisy shade and turbulent gaiety of a public square.

One morning at six o'clock Nana was awakened by the report of artillery. In the passage outside her room the servant was cleaning the boots of some women who lived on the same floor as herself, so the ex-courtesan sprang out of bed and set the door ajar. "What is the matter?" she asked. "Why are they firing cannons?"

"Why it's the fête of the Republic to-day," replied the servant. "It's the 14th July."

"Long live the Emperor!" cried three or four girls who were dressing in their rooms with the doors open.

"Just shut up!" said the servant. "You'll be bringing up the police."

This mention of the police alarmed the women and they at once closed their doors. Nana went to bed again and fell asleep. She had a frightful dream. She saw D'Albigny before her in a convict's costume, with a green cap on his head and a chain, by which he dragged a cannon-ball, around his ankle. He reproached her for having betrayed him and having caused his condemnation. And springing upon her he suddenly threw her down and fastened her to her old bedstead under the outspread wings of the eagle in massive silver. Then around the couch

where so many fortunes had evaporated he heaped up any number of lace skirts, silken robes and satin curtains like a funeral pile which he set on fire. And thereupon he went off, abandoning her to her fate. She could distinguish the sound of his footsteps and the rolling noise of the heavy ball which he dragged over the floor behind his heel. The flames arose around her, she could see the eagle soften and droop its head over her face, pouring tears of molten silver onto her eyes.

The noise of a dispute in an adjoining room at last delivered her from this terrible dream. One of the women living in the house was fighting with a chance lover who was wanting to go off without paying his score.

Outside, the growing hum of the fête-day crowd was rising to Nana's room. Every house was decked with flags from the roof to the ground-floor windows. Each side of the street was brilliant with tri-color bunting, which fluttered in the gentle breeze above the human tide flowing toward the boulevards. Stands were being erected here and there for out-door concerts. Girls were decking their hair with tri-color ribbons, and men wore commemorative metals suspended by tri-color favors from their button-holes. A joyous fraternity reigned among the workpeople in Sunday clothes, who, jostling each other in friendly fashion, drew aside to let little children pass along. The warmth of vitality brought the blood to the young women's faces. There was a serene gleam upon every brow, and the quiet crowd marched along elbow to elbow, confident in its peaceful strength.

At the approach of evening the popular enthusiasm increased. The houses were illuminated, the fairy-like glow of a universal coruscation arose on every side, and from each culminating point the fire-works shone out amid the night. Bouquets of fusees streamed from the sky in ruby, emerald and golden rain. And through the illuminated expanse patriotic refrains vibrated. The *Marseillaise* and the *Chant du Depart*, sung in chorus by compact masses of people, rose amid the constellated friezes of the public buildings, amid all the domes and spires, the pavilions of the Louvre, the square towers of Notre Dame, the round ones of Saint Sulpice, and the radiant colonnades of the flat-roofed Grecian temples.

There was no disorder, no hostility among the crowd. Proof of joyous peacefulness was furnished by the general politeness, the truly French urbanity, the generous respect which was shown for women and children, in the one desire to invest the fête with popular dignity and Gallic merriment. Housewives, clad in their holiday clothes, followed their husbands, leading such of their children as could walk by the hands. Fathers carried their younger offspring on their shoulders, and the delighted urchins clapped their little hands right heartily when parties of

young men, with flags unfurled, marched past singing the *Marseillaise.*

The *Marseillaise!* You could hear it soaring everywhere, like some free bird in lofty flight. It burst forth at times on the Place de la Bastille, and following the Boulevards, like a train of powder which rent the air; it arose on the Place de la Concorde, and re-echoed along the Champs Elyssés as far as the Arc de Triomphe. "Come, children of your country, come!" sang the crowd; "the day of glory has arrived!"

And the grand hymn ascended, in a formidable *crescendo* under the cupola of heaven. And it was not fratricidal war that the people celebrated with its generous lungs: it was universal liberty and fraternity, the proud declaration of faith in approaching justice, the pacific emancipation of a generation in travail of the future, the love of peace — not of peace at any price, but of proud, dignified peace, defended, if needs be, to the death by this million of men!

Nana wished to go out, and rang for the servant to accompany her. But a holiday had been given him, and so she went out alone. She wandered about, gloomy, disdainful and spiteful amid the general joy. She did not understand aught of the popular merriment, and so, having been slightly pushed against by a party of young workmen — who were singing, as they marched along at double quick — she turned her masked face toward them and cried: "You set of blackguards!"

They stopped short on hearing this insult, and surrounded the masked harlot, more disposed to laugh at her, however, than to insult her; and then, joining hands, they danced around her. When they had finished, they requested her to take off her mask. They all wanted to kiss her, to revenge themselves for the epithet which she had bestowed upon them. But she resisted, defending herself with all her wild beast's strength against these young fellows, in blouses smelling of sweat.

"Take off her mask! It's perhaps the Empress!" sneered a looker-on.

"Yes, that's it. Take off her mask — no masks here! Every one must show his face. Why does she hide hers? — to insult the people?"

Thereupon, a young fellow of fifteen, who was more agile than the others, caught hold of the mask by the nose and tore it off. And suddenly — like the face of a leper amid some festival of the middle ages — Nana's hideous countenance appeared in the light of the girandoles, amid the magical glow of the fête, the popular joy, and Gallic merriment.

"You are a set of cowards to insult a blind woman!" she cried, in her rasping voice, which vibrated with rage at having been thus publicly unmasked in her utter hideousness. "Yes,

you are all cowards!" she repeated; "and the proof of it is that not one of you will dare to kiss me now!"

There was a spell of deep silence, and then the young fellows, somewhat confused, and sorry for having brought this humiliation upon a stranger, approached Nana and apologized. One of them offered to fasten her mask again, but no one accepted her challenge.

"Well, do you know my name, you who have just asked for my forgiveness?" she asked.

"No matter who you may be, madame, pray go home quietly. If you are willing, we will take you there."

"Thanks, but I have no further need of men where I reside—I live alone! I was born in dirt, vice was my father, and shame my mother; and that is why I had a palace a year ago while you were starving of hunger, you pack of fools! Would you like to know who I am, you fellows who refuse to kiss me? I am a woman whose kiss was worth a million but a few months ago! I am Nana!"

At sight of this haughty expiation the crowd was stupefied. Nana was allowed to go off alone. Popular generosity protected her misery in silk attire. "Ah! yes, go off, poor girl," muttered an old man who had stopped to look at the scene; and the ex-harlot disappeared through the crowd at the corner of the Rue Lafayette and the Boulevard Haussmann. Hereabouts the branches of the trees were lighted up, stalls and lotteries solicited the attention of passers-by, and at one end an open-air orchestra was playing a waltz, which several young swells in evening dress, and officers in uniform were dancing with some pretty work-girls, duly proud of the honor.

Nana followed the foot-pavement, keeping close to the houses, and guiding herself with the tip of her parasol, with which she touched the walls. And at times she thought of her old fêtes, of the fragrance exhaled by her perfume burners during her nights of orgy, of her golden lamps encrusted with precious stones, of her boudoir mantelshelf in rock crystal, bearing her initials in silver, surmounted by a topaz crown. She could again see, in her mind's eye, her various lackeys, her negroes, and her gorilla, the poor Yorick who had been murdered while defending her against some betrayed lover. She would have given all of the bitter, horrible life of abandonment that remained to her for another hour of that maddening existence amid her courtiers in the luminous splendor of the incessant fête and the lasciviency of night-time. Lust! She was maddened by the contempt of those proletarians who had disdained her insults, and shirked her challenge. Once more did her blood flow feverishly in her veins, and through her whole being coursed shivers of desire, vague at first, but growing more precise as she realized that even man, despite his bestiality, was

disgusted with her, and shrank from her. Once more did passion burn her flesh, heated by the breath of youth still tarrying in her mutilated frame, which henceforth could only inspire physical horror and contempt!

And Nana began to regret the pleasures of the past. She wandered amid the crowd, happy to feel herself pushed against, pressed, and carried along; she followed the human tide, listened to the ardent flight of the *Marseillaise* along the Boulevards, and to the brass instruments which here and there were playing popular waltzes and polkas for merry-making youth.

At the end of the Boulevard Haussmann she turned down the Rue Taitbout, and then mechanically, without knowing where she was going, she again took the Rue Lafayette, and followed it to the Rue de Provence. By a sudden transition she found herself in a deserted street, where the noise of the fête barely penetrated. She had no idea where she was, and as nobody passed along, it was impossible for her to ask her way. So she went on, walking straight before her, tapping the walls with her parasol. Her pace was almost swift, for she was carried on by her old audacity and carelessness of peril, and by the sensual madness which was lashing her blood and her nerves. Suddenly, however, she stumbled against what seemed to her to be a long pole stretched horizontally across the footway at the height of her waist. This pole, which was badly secured, gave way at one end, and Nana, thrown forward, stretched out her arms to clutch at something that might save her from falling. But she felt that she was descending. Where? She could not tell. The pole, which the weight of her body had unfastened, was hanging down, and as she fell with outstretched arms, she succeeded in grasping it, and remained clinging by both hands above an unknown depth! What danger threatened her? She knew not. She only realized that there was empty space under her feet, and silence above her head.

The distant noise of the fête, with its shouts, songs and music, was wafted to her at intervals. "Help! help!" she cried.

A window opened, and the courtesan called still more loudly. Then the window closed again. No doubt some one was coming to help her. She almost reproached herself for the sudden fright and weakness which the surprise of this fall had caused her. She waited impatiently. So far as she could calculate, it seemed to her that the window which had been opened was on the second floor. Her rescuer would need the time to come down-stairs and rouse the porter of the house. She counted mentally: "One minute to come down, one minute to wake the porter, two more to pull me out. Let us say five minutes in all—in five minutes I shall be saved."

At this moment she did not feel the slightest doubt of being

rescued; but she soon began to grow tired, and tried, by the mere strength of her wrists, to approach the edge of the excavation. She succeeded in doing so, despite the pain which the broken finger caused her; and she felt a vertical surface against her knee. The pavemen and the orifice of the cavity into which lassitude was already drawing her, were situated just above her head. She realized that salvation was there, close by. If some one merely came and held her his hand, she would be easily helped up to the street again. But what could that person upstairs be thinking of? She had been waiting for more than five minutes already. Perhaps the house-porter was asleep, and wouldn't open the door. At this thought she cried out again. "Help! help!" she called, in a voice which was strangled by growing fright.

What! did no one pass along this infernal street? She tried to raise herself up by her arms, leaning against one side of the excavation. She grazed her knees against the stone-work in the effort, but she was unable to raise her body. Her fingers were becoming paralyzed. Inertness was stealing over her. If she had only been able to use her right hand freely she would certainly have managed to escape from this situation; but the pain which her broken finger caused her was becoming insupportable. She felt dizzy. A fatal helplessness was seizing hold of her. If she could only succeed in sustaining herself horizontally by both knees to the pole she clung to! She made a supreme effort, hanging in space, clinging first by one foot, then by the other, and then by her knees. She remained thus, clutching the pole, the rough surface of which had badly grazed her hands.

At this moment some one ran along the other side of the street. "Help! help! Pray help me to get out of here!" begged Nana.

The footsteps ceased. The man who had been running had evidently heard her.

'Help! help!" she cried again.

But a voice replied: "You want to catch me, you joker, do you? Don't try it on with me!" and the man then ran off again, the sound of his footsteps dying away far down the street.

However, Nana could not possibly remain all night in this trying situation. She felt a sharp pain down her back and at the nape of her neck. There was a ringing in her ears, her numbed fingers began to slip, and suddenly she relaxed her hold, and remained hanging by her legs, with her head downward, and her mouth gagged, so to say, by her skirts, which fell over her face, stifling her last cries.

The consciousness that she would be unable to escape from this frightful yet grotesque position abruptly dawned upon her mind. She, the harlot, was seized with abominable despair, with a wild longing to live, and an intense fear of death.

And still no one came! The attractive scene on the grand boulevards had cleared the little streets.

Congestion was gaining her brain, and it suddenly seemed to her as if all the blood in her body was raining into her skull in a burning flood. Then vertigo mastered her, and she let herself fall! Had it not been for the skirts hanging down below her head she would have broken her skull against the bottom of the pit into which she was precipitated. For a moment she remained half stunned, conscious of her condition, but without the strength to rise again. Her moans were stifled by the silk folds enveloping her face, and she lay there on her stomach, wallowing, as it were in filthy slime.

She now realized where she was: She had fallen into a sewer which was being repaired. She could feel on her flesh the dampness of greasy mud, in which the vermin of filth were swarming.

At this moment the rain began to fall through the aperture in the vault above her. The cold set it's grip on her limbs and penetrated to her blood and the marrow of her bones. She shivered.

By an ironical contrast the memory of her life of mad enjoyment returned to her. She thought of the time when men fought for her, when Stog died amid one of her fêtes, when Mulhausen ruined himself, when the rajah lighted her candelabra with bank notes, and when the old king who had become her jester, squandered his subjects' money to amuse her. Ah! in those days everyone stopped to look at her, and the greatest lords, proudly erect on their spirited horses, besought the honor of escorting her when she drove up the Champs Elysées in her blue, silver-mounted landau, bearing her coroneted initial. Of an evening when she went to the theatre the whole house rose up; every opera glass was turned upon her in admiration; her eyes glanced round the boxes, and with a careless gesture she acknowledged the homage of her courtiers, who from afar bent their bare heads before her diadem of brilliants. And the suppers! And the nights of ruinous folly, of which all Europe knew the legend! What had become of that unheard-of dream of triumphant opulence? Where had it gone, her reign of lust? Was it all to finish like this? She had once crushed the people with her insolence; and now, on the night of this popular fête, while she was drowning amid the dregs of the great city, the crowd danced above the tomb in which she agonized.

Nana—'twas the rottenness of enervated generations, flowing through the stinking quagmire; her chastisements 'twas the revenge of virtuous women over insolent debauchery and triumphant vice! She could still hear far away, outside, the joyous hum and shouting, the singing, and still the same waltz to

which the dancers raised their feet while she was gasping for breath.

She suddenly felt a sensation of viscous cold on the soles of her feet. Thick filth was rising along her legs and hips, gliding under her belly, crawling between her titties, licking her throat, entering her mouth between her clinched teeth, penetrating into the empty orbits of her eyes, through her eyelids parted by sudden fright, and flowing into her nasal apertures — everywhere! everywhere! She wanted to cry out but the filth rushed into her throat, stifling her voice. And this glue-like mud, rising all around, at last submerged her. She felt herself impelled along, knocking against the slimy walls, drawn down a slope, as it were, with her whole body immersed in the slough of pollution.

She was seized with rage. She revolted against this odious fetid death, and for one moment she regained her strength. Raising herself on her knees, with the water to her waist, as she remained in this attitude of humility, she drew her skirts impregnated with filth from her face and called aloud. Her cries were re-echoed under the arched roof in muffled sonority. Then she drew herself up against the wall, stretching out her arms under the low vault. On the left-hand side a dull noise, a long murmur of human voices descended by an aperture, from which some water was flowing. A gutter there communicated with the sewer.

Despite the rain, despite the storm, the dancing continued outside, and the patriotic refrains still rose amid the night. The water also was now rising in the sewer less thick and dirty, but more swiftly and terribly. Nana could no longer struggle. Despite her resistance she felt herself dragged down the slope, and the current lifted her off her legs. Near the sewer flue she tried to stop and call for help, but she received the shower-bath from the street full in the face, and rolled away again with the current, crushed by the weight of the water, mingled with refuse and excrements. At last she raised herself once more, and clung despairingly with both hands to an arch above her. All the force of the torrent was then directed upon her loins, with a power that increased as her own strength diminished.

She was seized with abominable despair, a furious, maddening desire to live! Alone, buried alive, almost stifled by the vile effluvia which passed along this putrid passage, she now thought with indescribable regret of the last weeks of her life, of the lodging-house, of the women who had slept near her, and whose disputes at night time had so often disturbed her, of the servant who had so often taken her to the square. Then at one bound she went back to the first year of her licentiousness, and tried to remember her first lover. But so many others had swept his lineaments from her memory. Of all those who had

held her in their arms, none appeared to her but Luc, whose pale ashy face now suddenly rose up amid her night of agony. In her feverish fancy he appeared to her with his fantastically lean figure, and his floured clown's face, as she had seen him at St. Cloud.

Then through the darkness, in a voice which was broken by anguish she cried: "Luc, come and save me, come, my little Luc! Help me out of here. To die such a death — Ah! it's frightful — for a woman like me!"

Delirium made her temples throb. Amid the subterranean roar of the water falling from the street, she thought she could detect the sound of a voice, which answered her with the old clown's nasal twang: "It is thy death, yes, thy death, thou harlot! Thou art fallen where all strumpets of thy kind must fall! Go, roll, roll away to the river, wash thyself, my girl, wash thyself!"

"But no! I will not die, I won't, I won't——"

Then in her fright she began to shriek under the vault; and although she still instinctively tried to restrain herself, the last convulsion was near at hand, and madness abruptly burst forth in her brain. "Virginie! Virginie!" she suddenly roared, "my bath is too cold. I dismiss you!"

Her arms were growing weaker and weaker. The current had reached her shoulders, and the weight of the water was breaking her back. She bent, conquered, and rolled away amid the floating filth, while upon her, from the apertures above, there poured all the spittles of the streets, the slime of the boulevards, the slops of the city, the scourings of every shame, and the vomits of orgies which she swallowed until suffocation and then spat forth again with blood!

She sank to the bottom, and rose again further off — DEAD!

And her body continued rolling onward, black with slime, swollen with mud, turning hideous somersaults amid the whirlpools in the livid light which fell from the orifices above.

THE END.